



# Funding in elite sport: an international comparison of prioritization policies in 15 nations.

Results from the SPLISS study

*Veerle De Bosscher, Simon Shibli*



**SPORTS POLICY FACTORS  
LEADING TO INTERNATIONAL  
SPORTING SUCCESS**

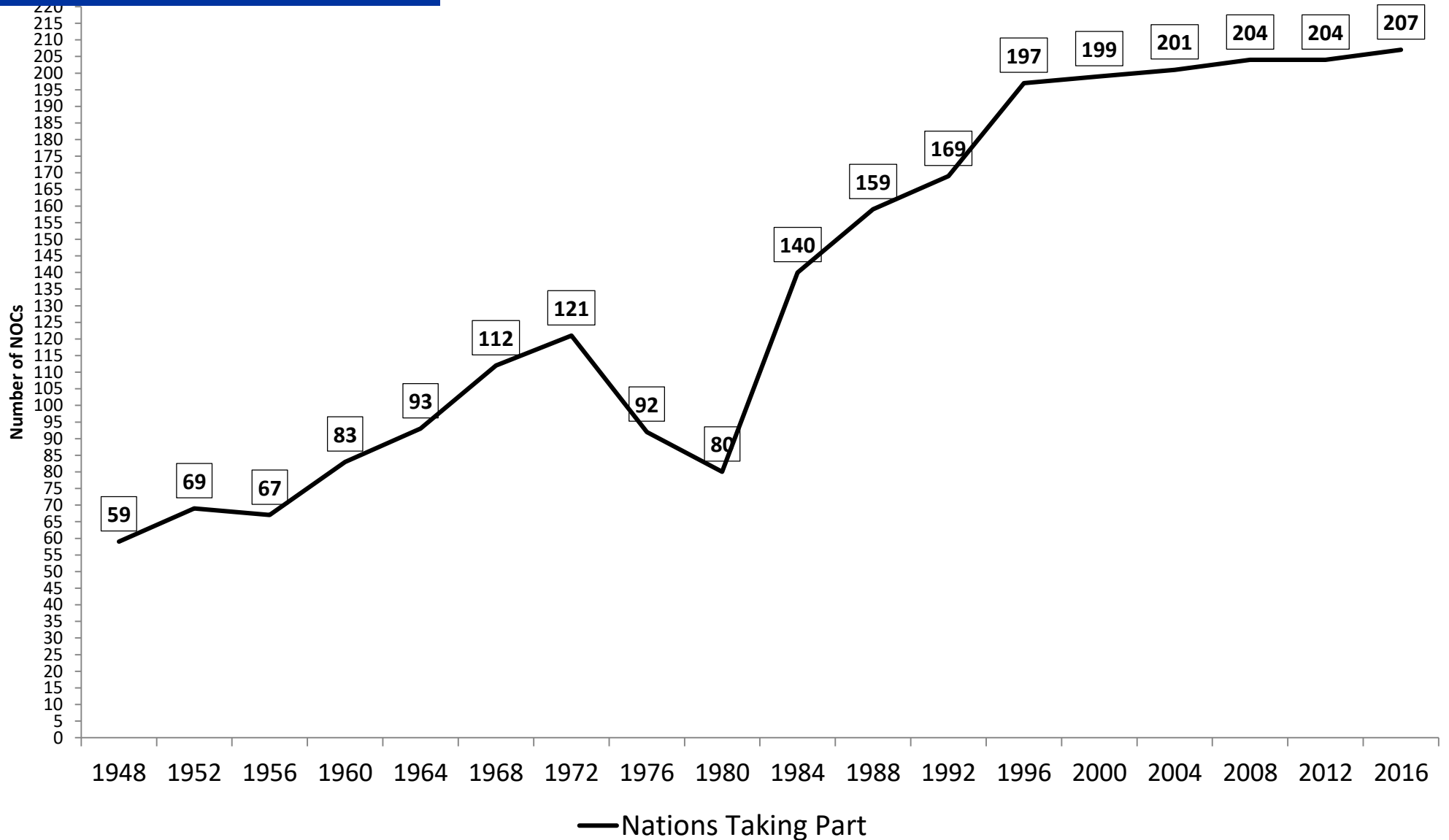
A solid blue horizontal bar containing the word "CONTENT" in white, uppercase, sans-serif font.

## CONTENT

- CONTEXT OF ELITE SPORT
- ABOUT SPLISS
- PRIORITISATION OF ELITE SPORT:
  - Do countries prioritise?
  - Does prioritization lead to success?
- Conclusion

# DYNAMIC CONTEXT (1): CHANGING COMPETITION - CHALLENGES (1)

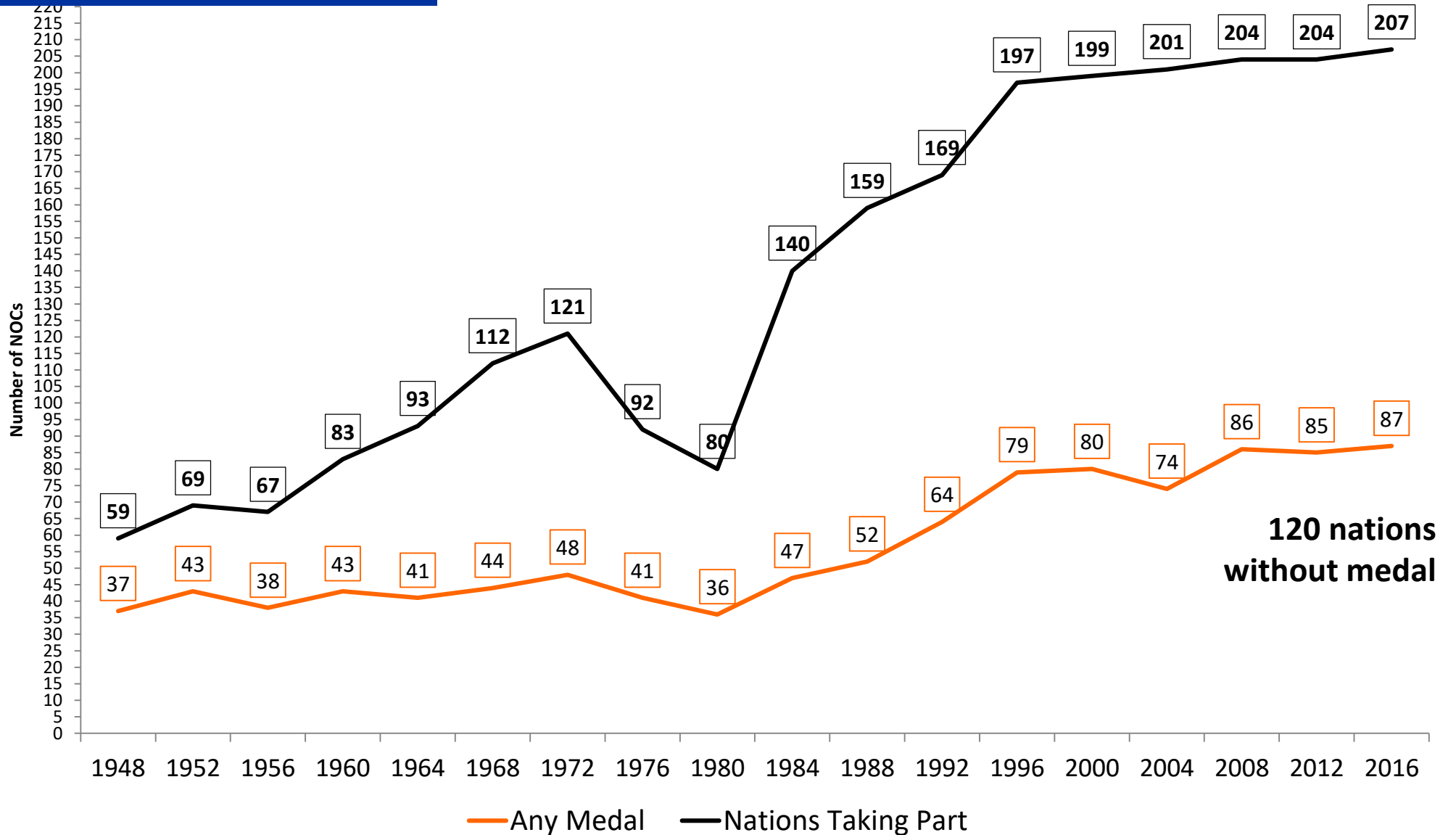
## NATIONS COMPETING AT OLYMPICS



Shibli, 2016

# DYNAMIC CONTEXT (1): CHANGING COMPETITION - CHALLENGES (1)

## NATIONS COMPETING AT OLYMPICS



Shibli, 2016

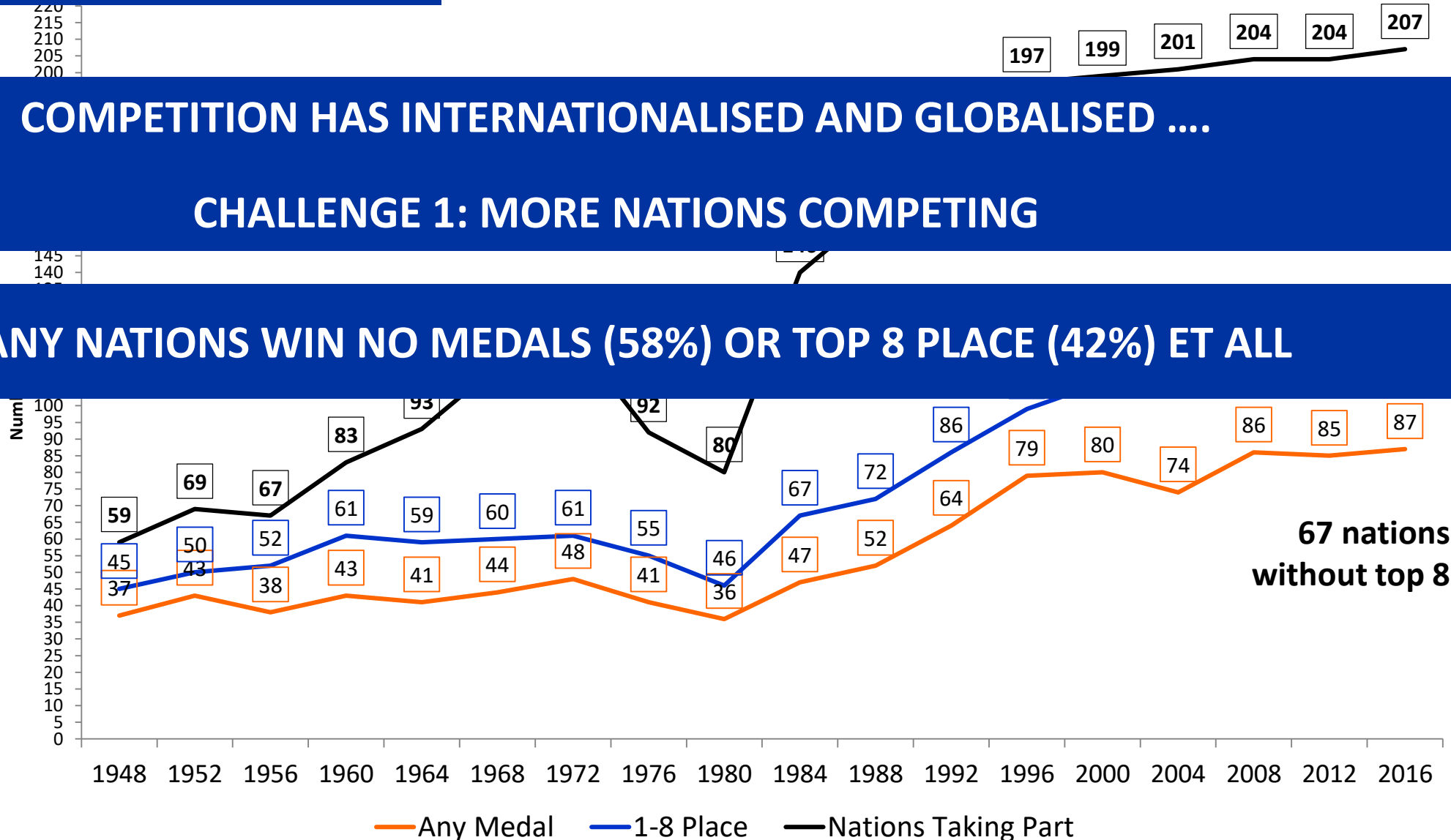
# DYNAMIC CONTEXT (1): CHANGING COMPETITION - CHALLENGES (1)

## NATIONS COMPETING AT OLYMPICS

COMPETITION HAS INTERNATIONALISED AND GLOBALISED ...

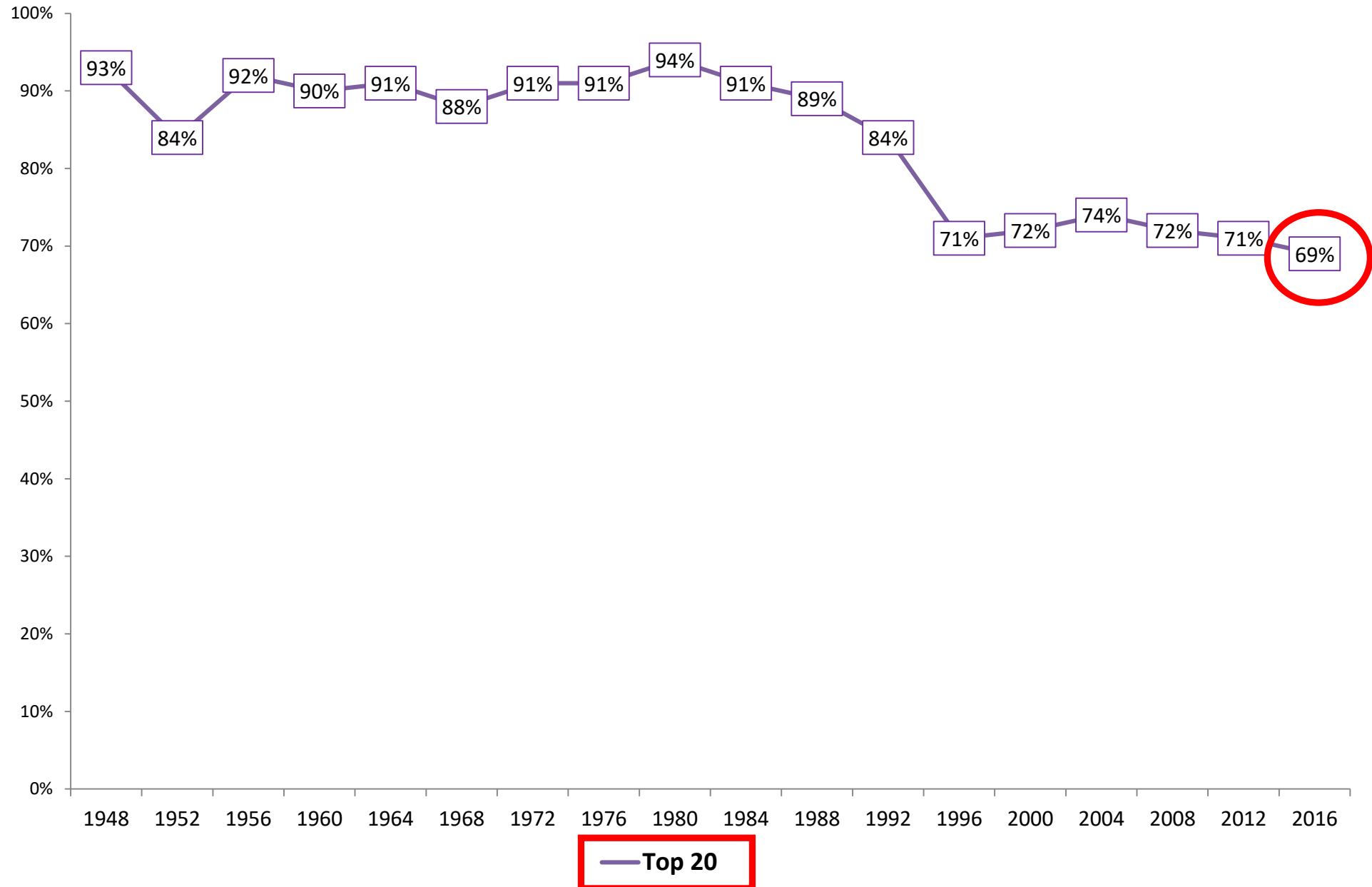
CHALLENGE 1: MORE NATIONS COMPETING

MANY NATIONS WIN NO MEDALS (58%) OR TOP 8 PLACE (42%) ET ALL



Shibli, 2016

## CONTEXT/ DYNAMICS (2): CHANGING COMPETITION - CHALLENGES (2)

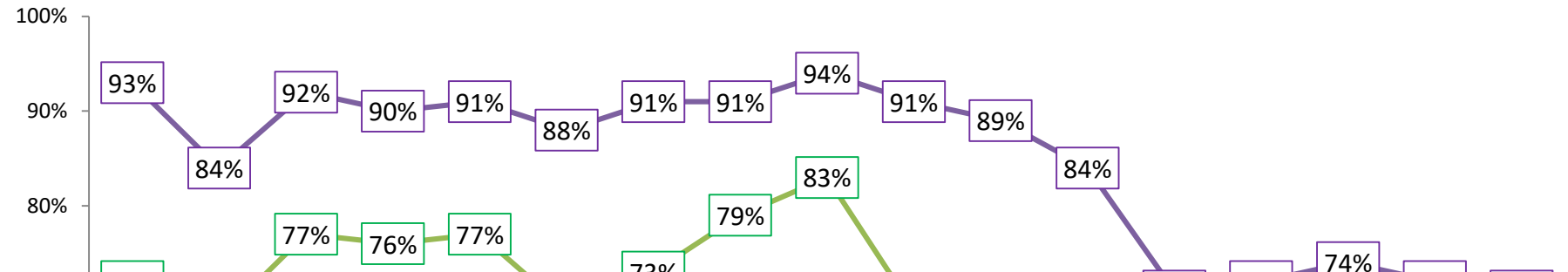


Shibli, 2016

Sheffield Hallam University | Sport Industry Research Centre

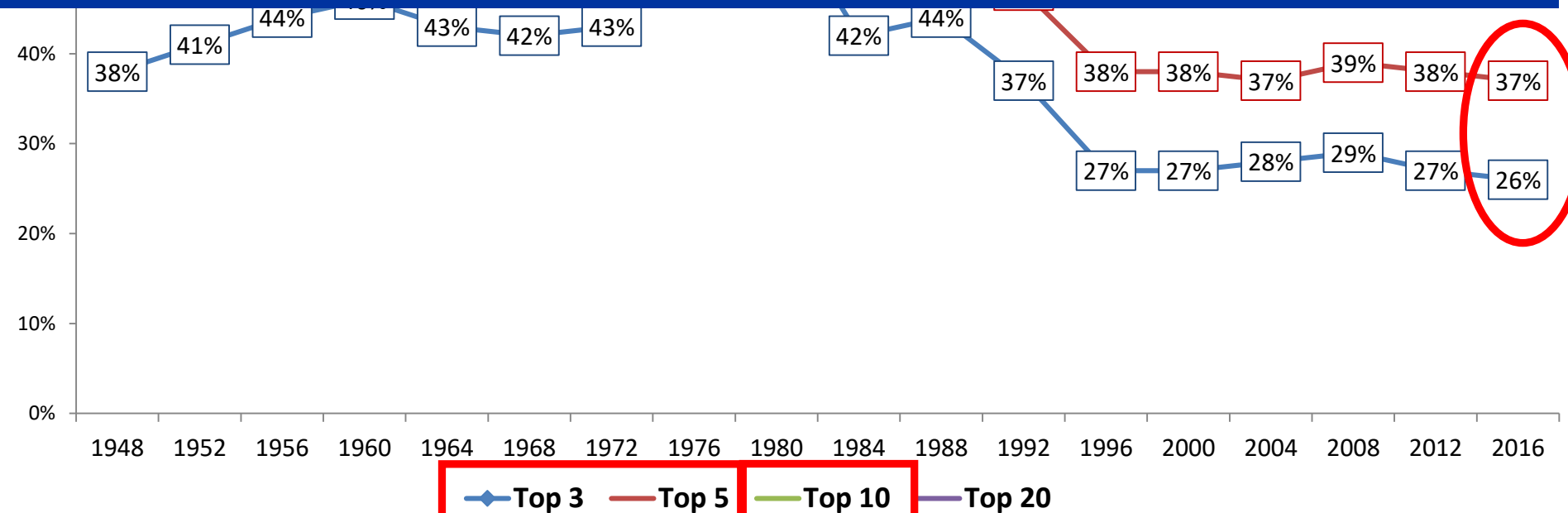
VUB VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT BRUSSEL

## CONTEXT/ DYNAMICS (2): CHANGING COMPETITION - CHALLENGES (2)



ALTHOUGH SUCCESS IS MORE WIDELY SPREAD COMPARED TO 20 YEARS AGO ...

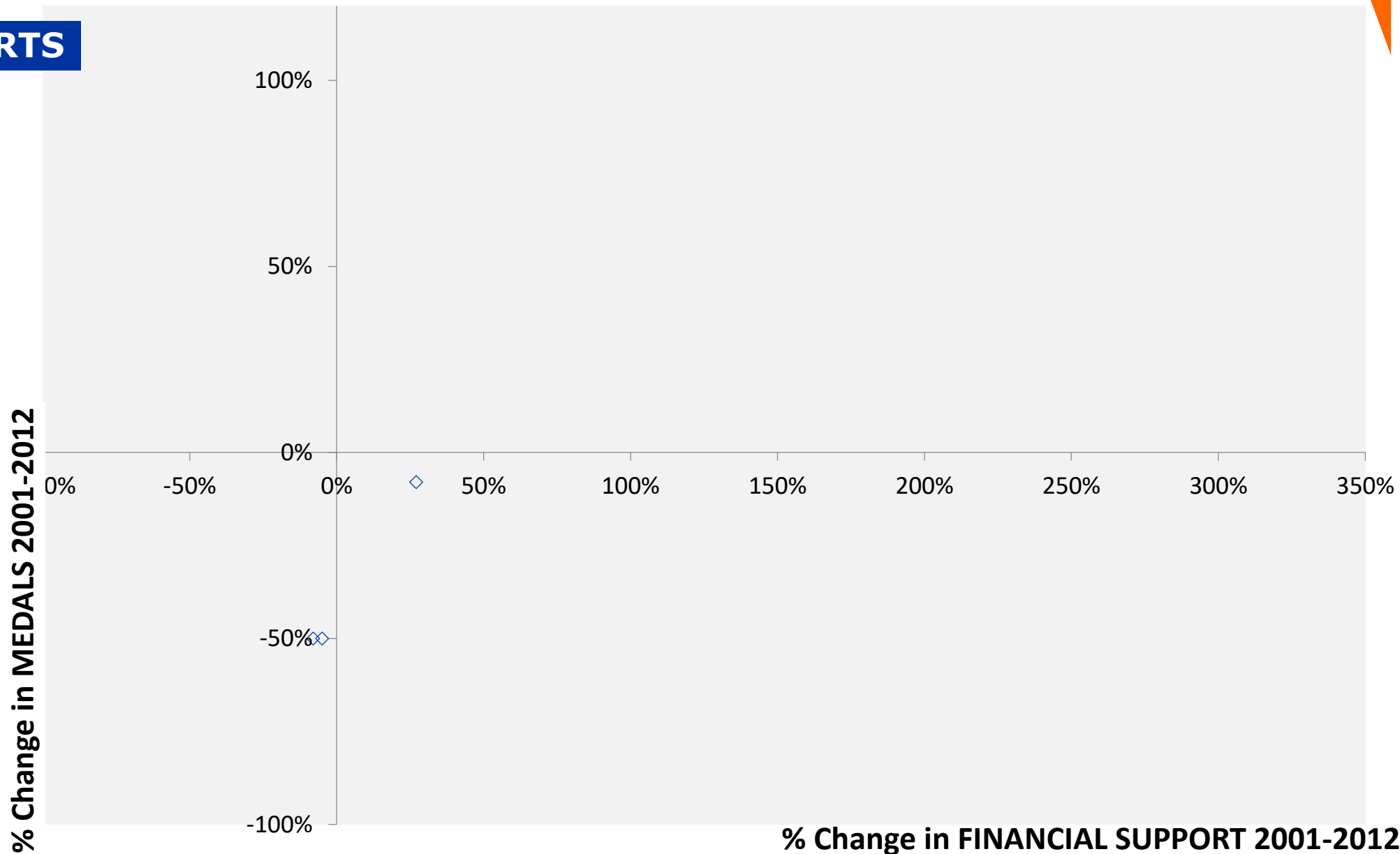
CHALLENGE 2: ELITE SPORT/OLYMPIC SUCCESS IS STILL DOMINATED BY A SELECTIVE NUMBER OF (MAINLY WEALTHY AND INDUSTRIALISED) NATIONS



Shibli, 2016

# CONTEXT/ DYNAMICS (3): MORE MONEY ... MORE MEDALS?

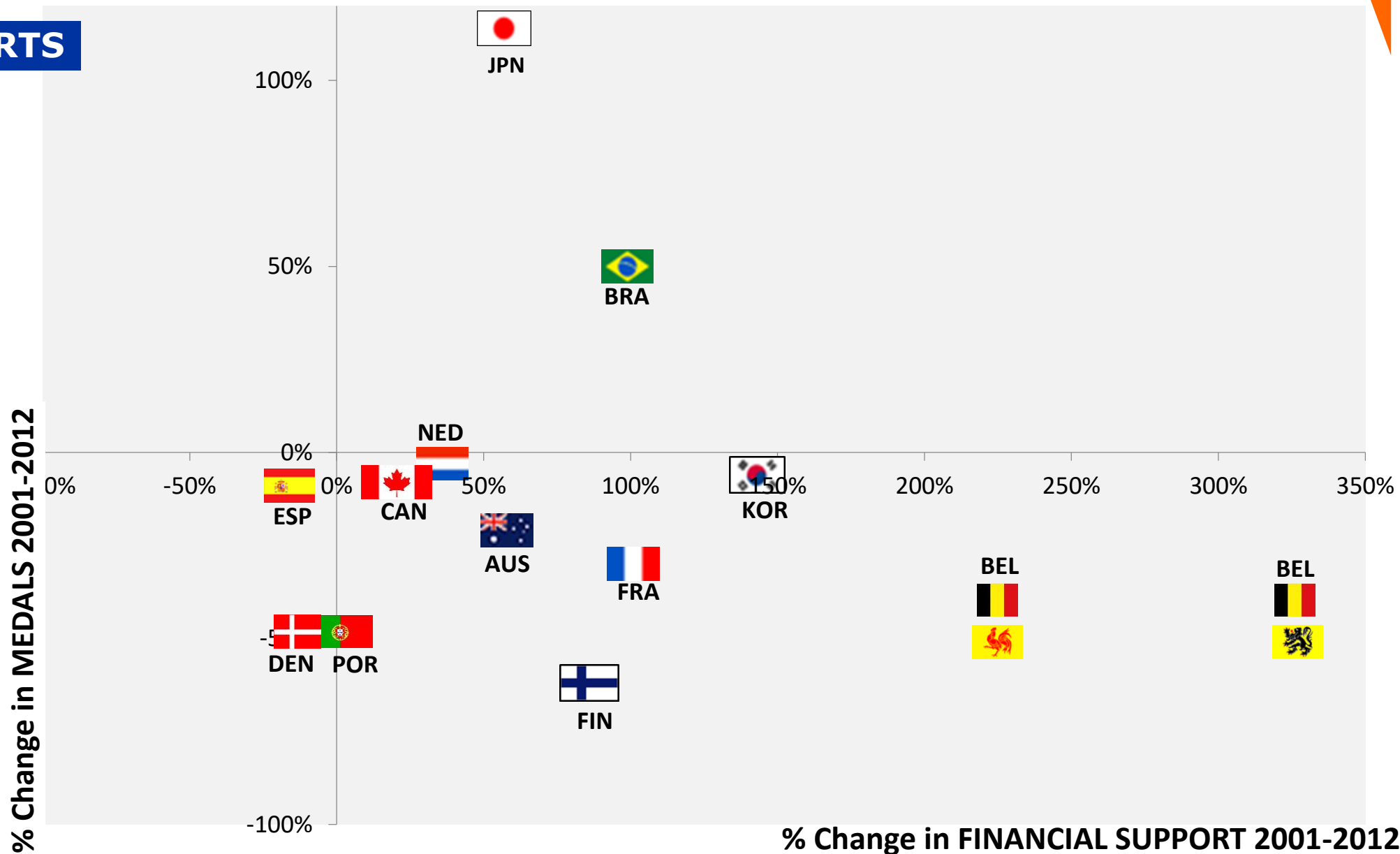
## SUMMER SPORTS





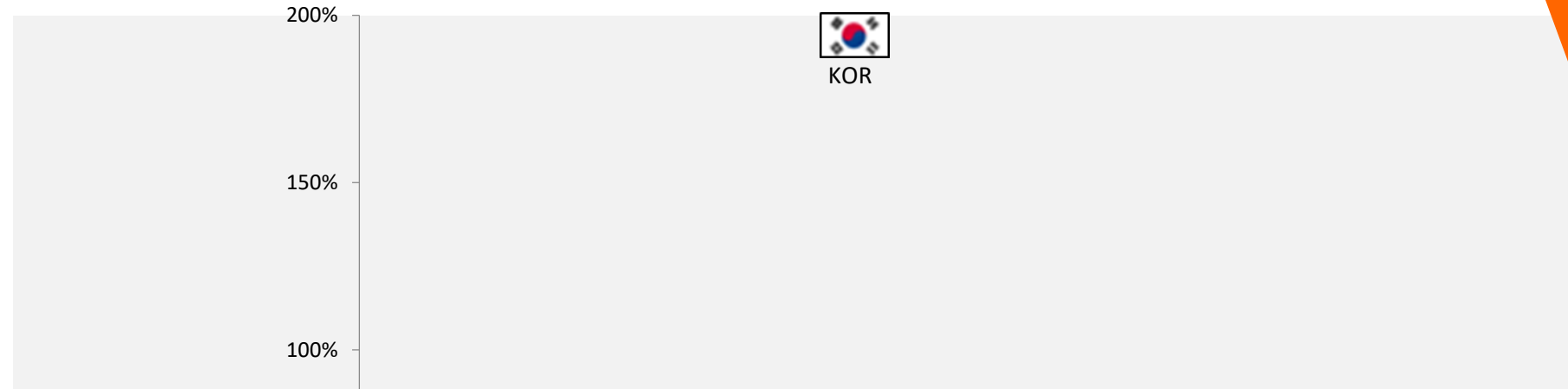
# CONTEXT/ DYNAMICS (3): MORE MONEY ... MORE MEDALS?

## SUMMER SPORTS



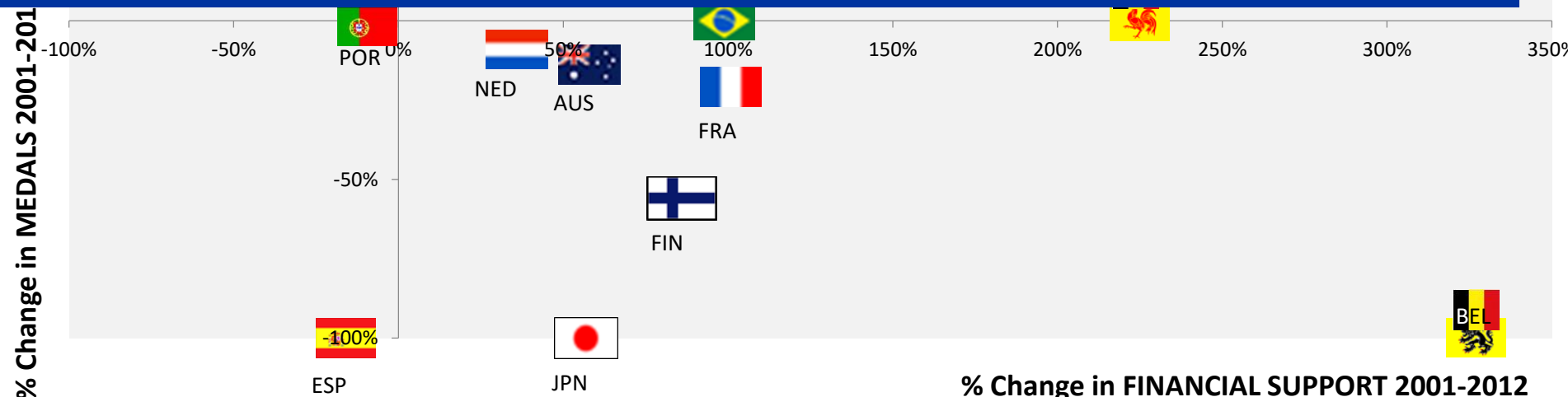
# CONTEXT/ DYNAMICS (3): MORE MONEY ... MORE MEDALS?

## WINTER SPORTS



### EVIDENCE OF INCREASING COMPETITION

CHALLENGE 3: THE PRICE OF SUCCESS HAS RISEN AND NATIONS INVEST MORE STRATEGICALLY IN ELITE SPORT

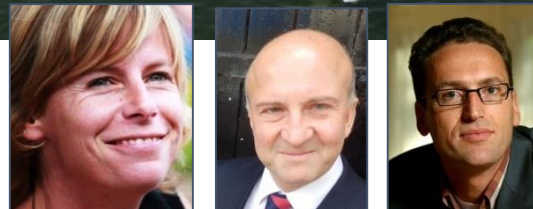


# Why are some countries more successful than others?

*ABOUT SPLISS - Who we are & what we do*



**S**PORTS **P**OLICY FACTORS **L**EADING TO  
**I**NTERNATIONAL **S**PORTING **S**UCCESS



# Factors explaining international sporting success



=



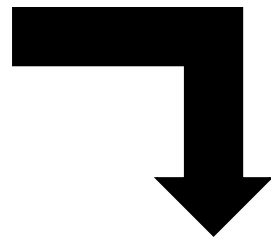
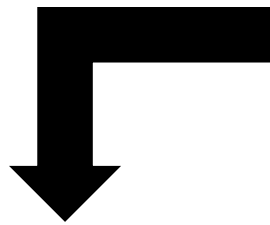
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> 50%

+





**50%**

**50%**



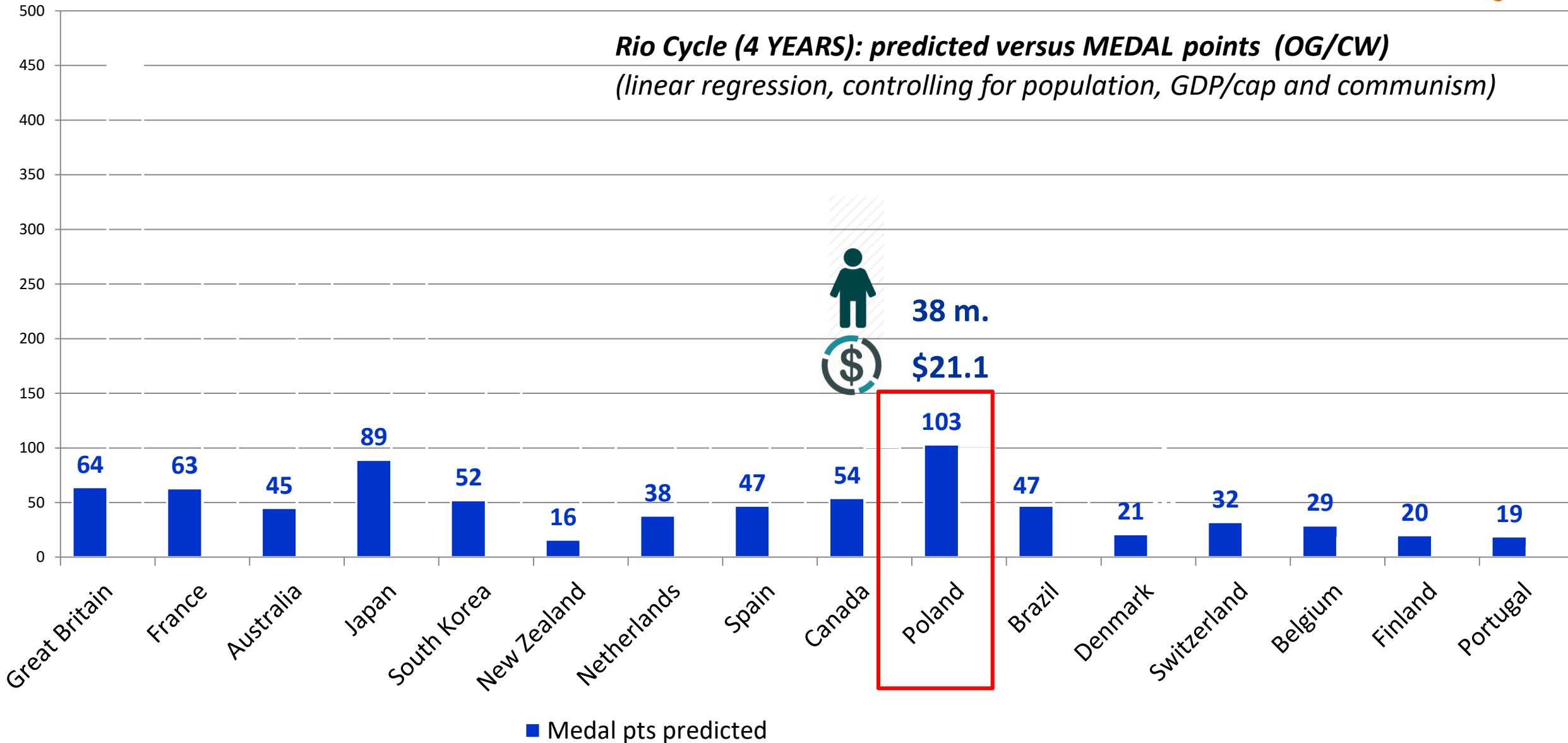
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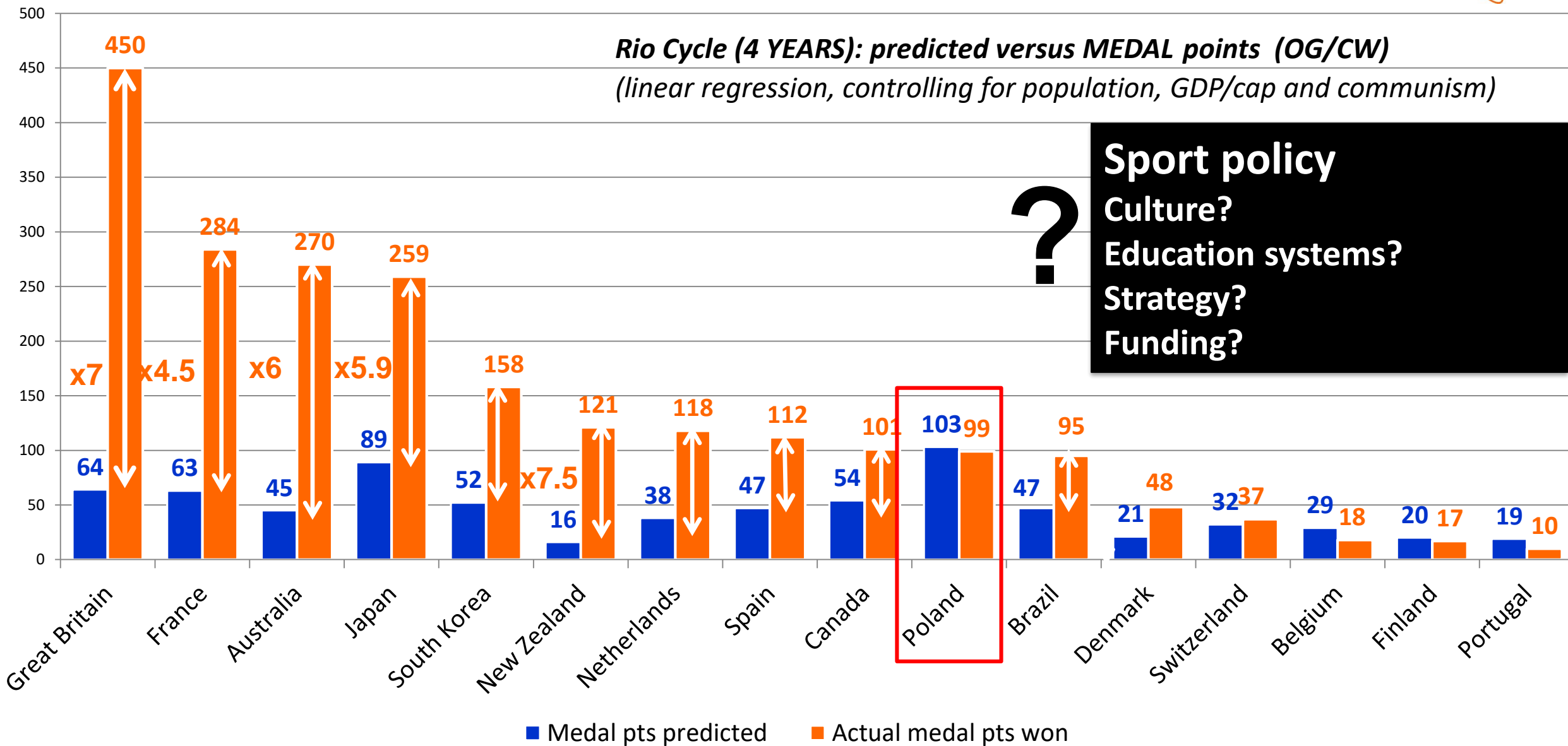
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# Why are some countries more succesful than others?



# Why are some countries more succesful than others?





## PURPOSE

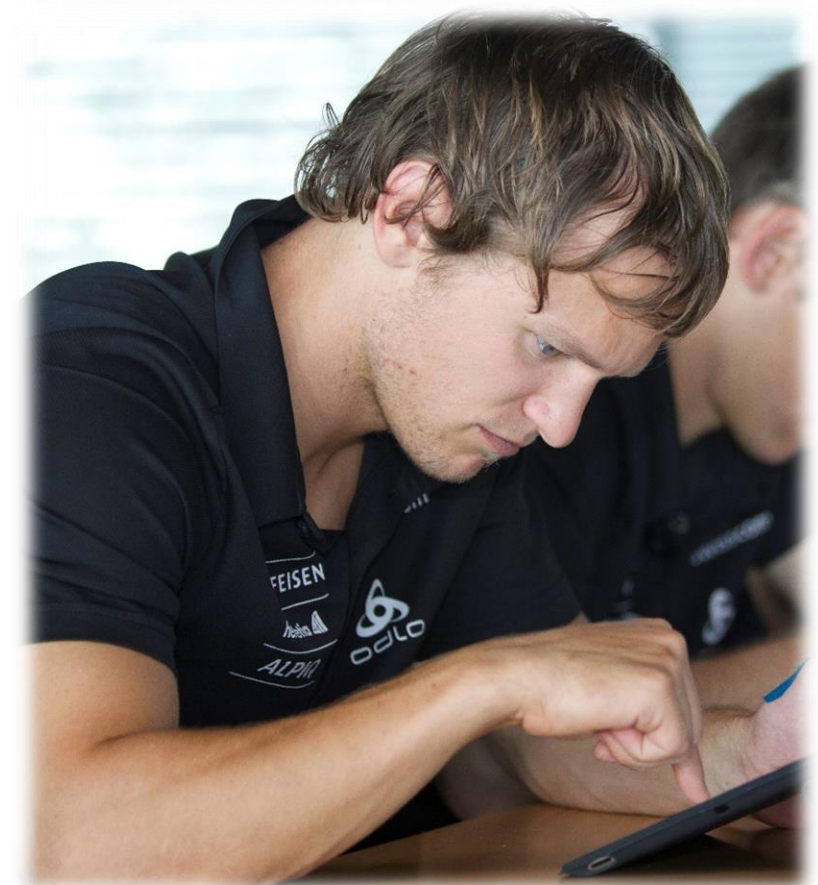
- Evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of elite sport policies at the national level

MONITOR AND EVALUATE ELITE SPORT POLICIES

DETERMINE FUTURE STRATEGIES

IMPROVE COMPETITIVENESS

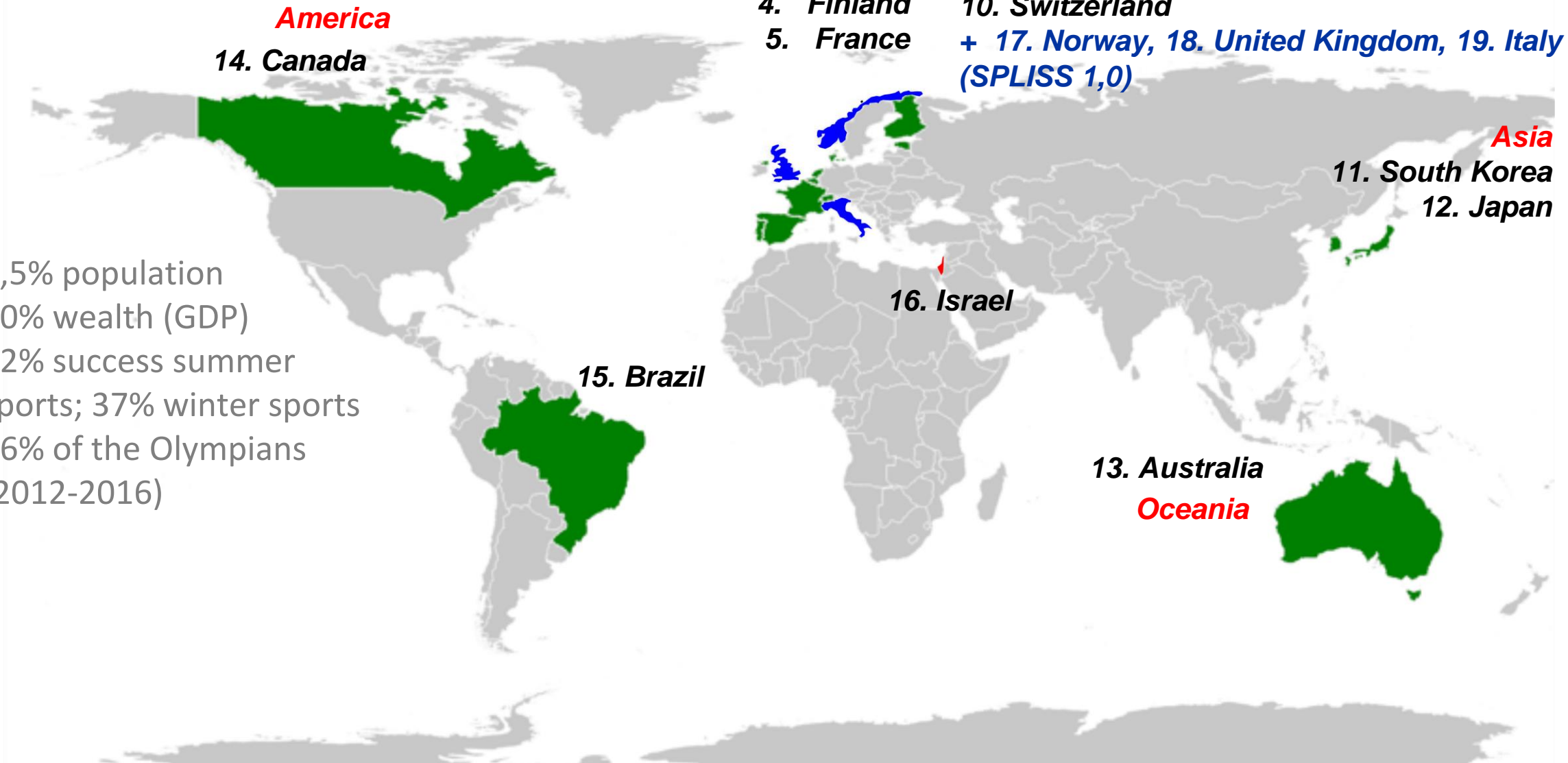
[www.spliss.net](http://www.spliss.net)





- EUROPE**
1. Belgium (Flanders & Wallonia)
  2. Denmark
  3. Estonia
  4. Finland
  5. France
  6. The Netherlands
  7. Northern Ireland (GBR)
  8. Portugal
  9. Spain
  10. Switzerland
  - + 17. Norway, 18. United Kingdom, 19. Italy (SPLISS 1,0)

- 8,5% population
- 10% wealth (GDP)
- 22% success summer sports; 37% winter sports
- 26% of the Olympians (2012-2016)

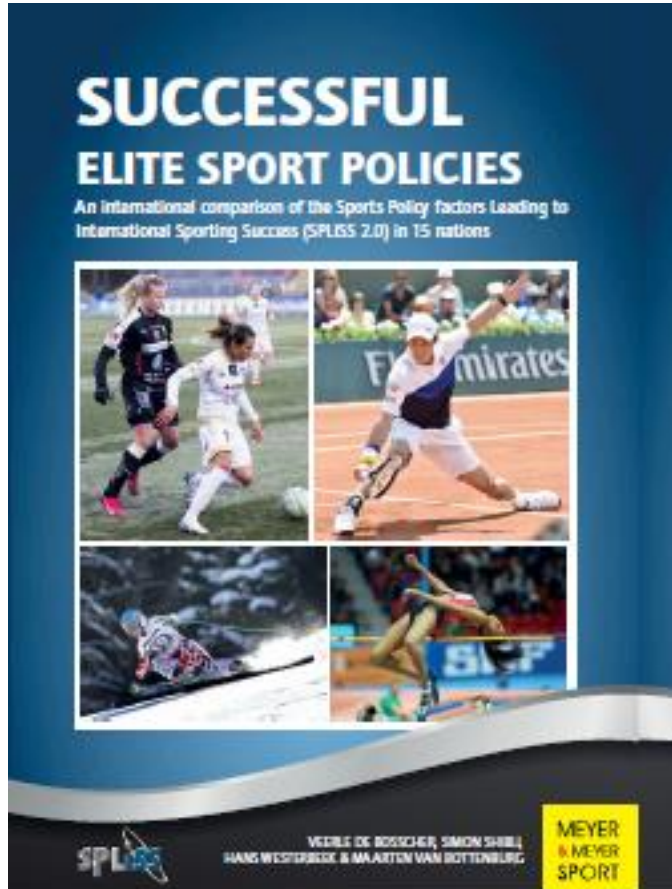




## A COLLABORATION OF

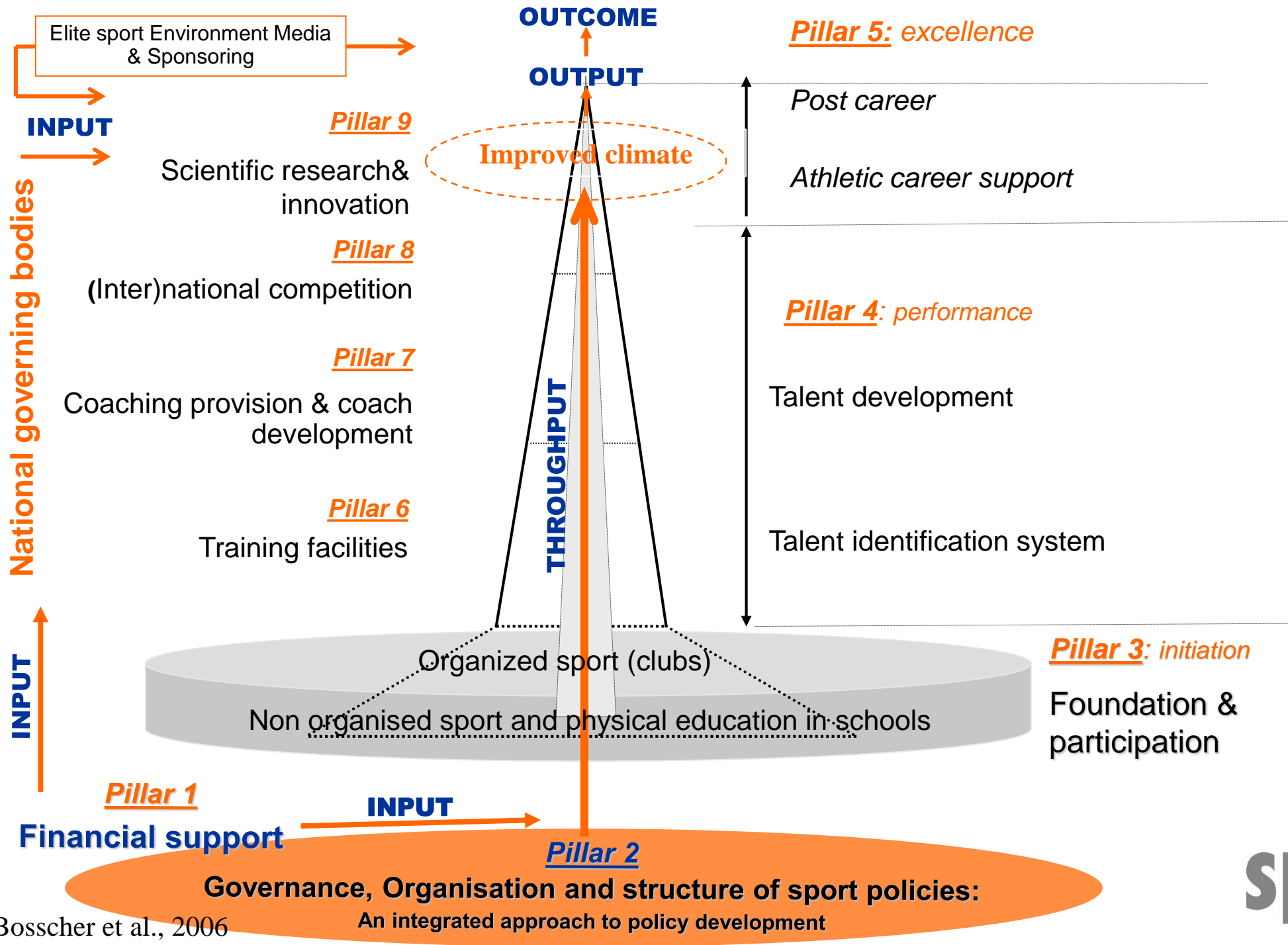
- **Local researchers: 15 nations, 53 researchers, 33 policy organisations**
- **3142 elite athletes, 1376 coaches, 241 federations**

[www.SPLISS.net](http://www.SPLISS.net)



**Consortium group**







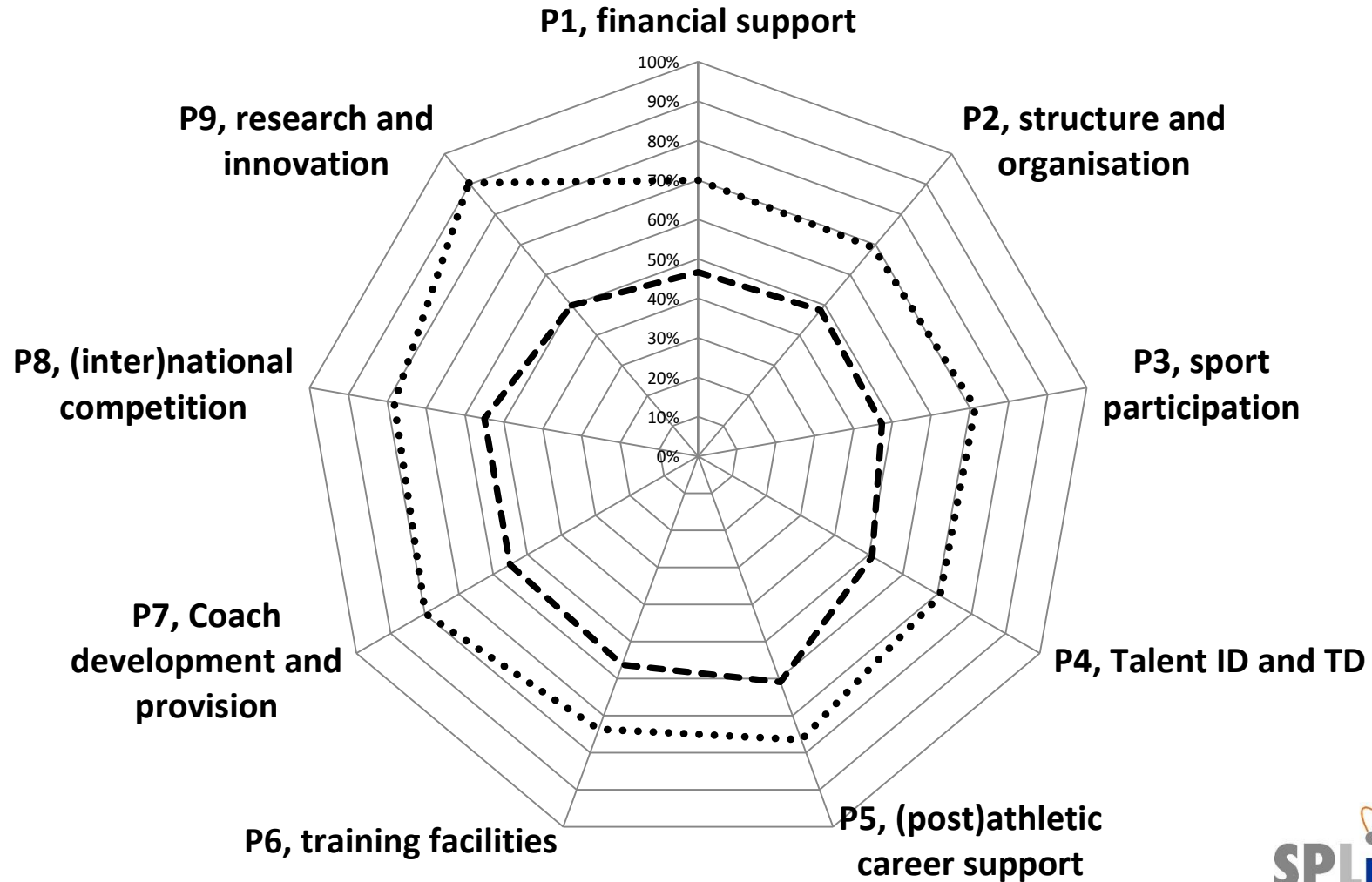
**AVERAGE**

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**MAX**

.....

# Successful summer sport nations





**AVERAGE**



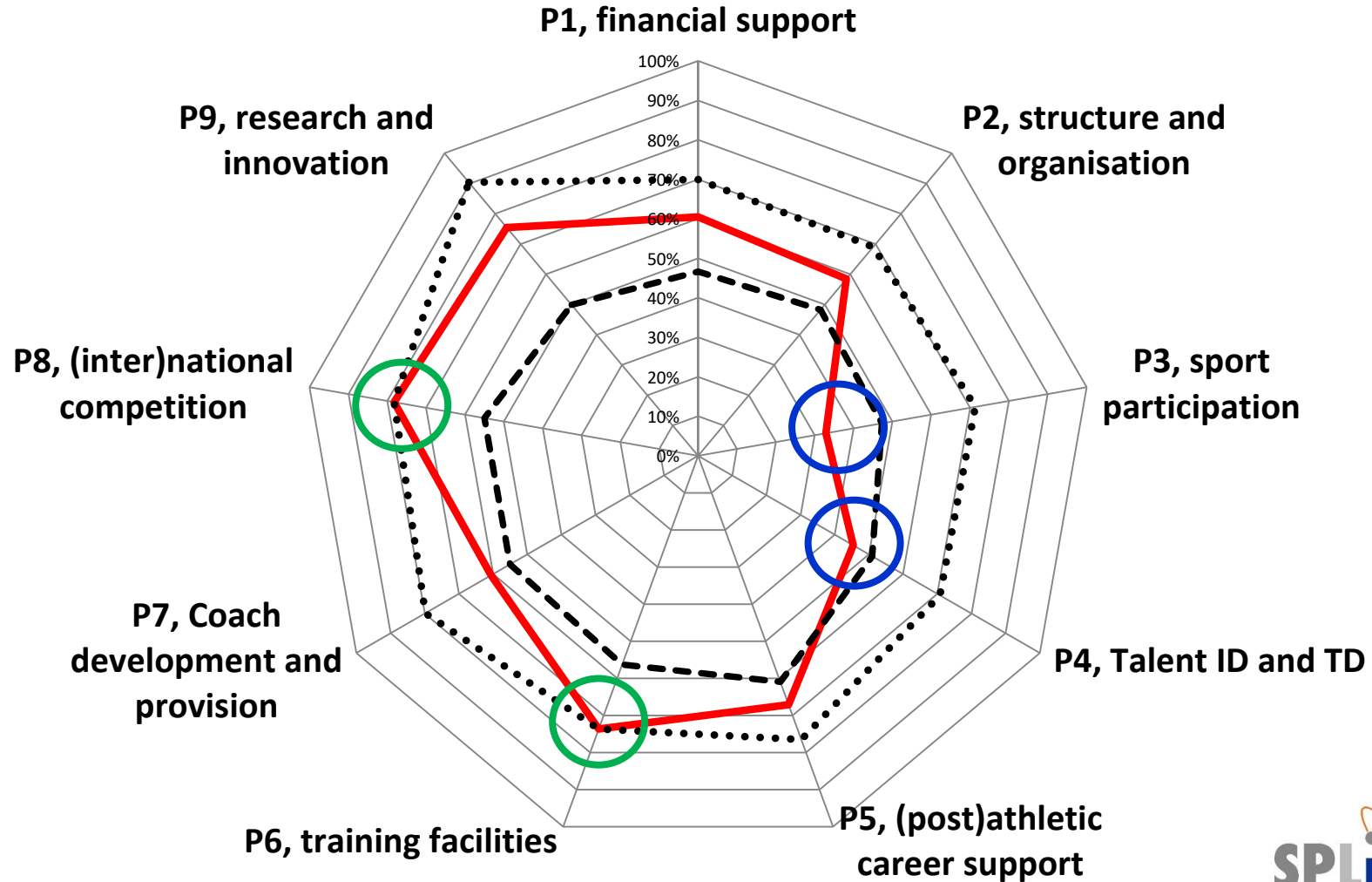
**MAX**



**JAPAN**



# Successful summer sport nations





AVERAGE



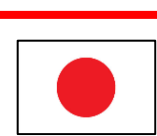
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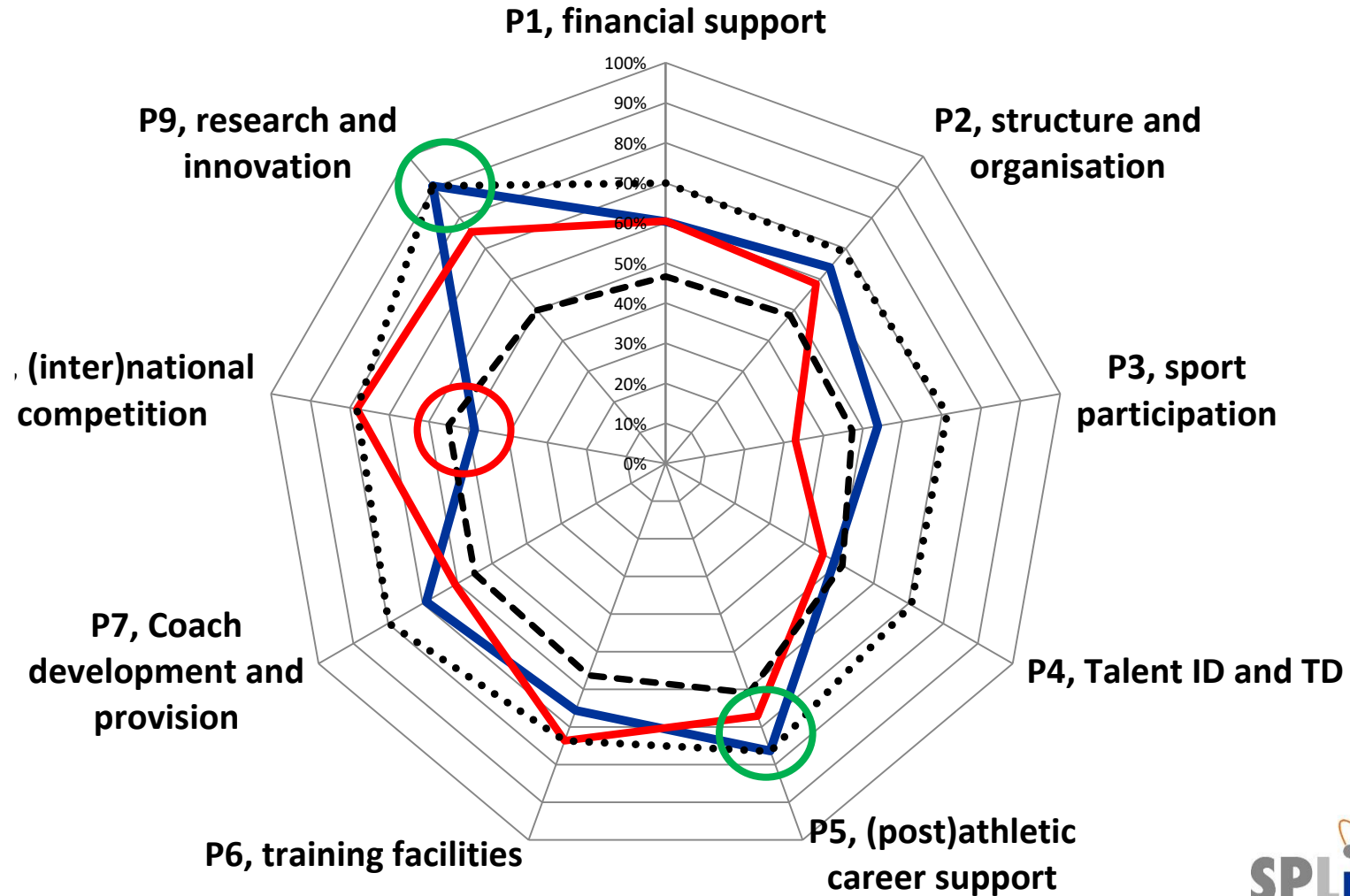
AUSTRALIA



JAPAN



# Successful summer sport nations





**AVERAGE**



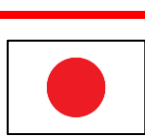
**MAX**



**AUSTRALIA**



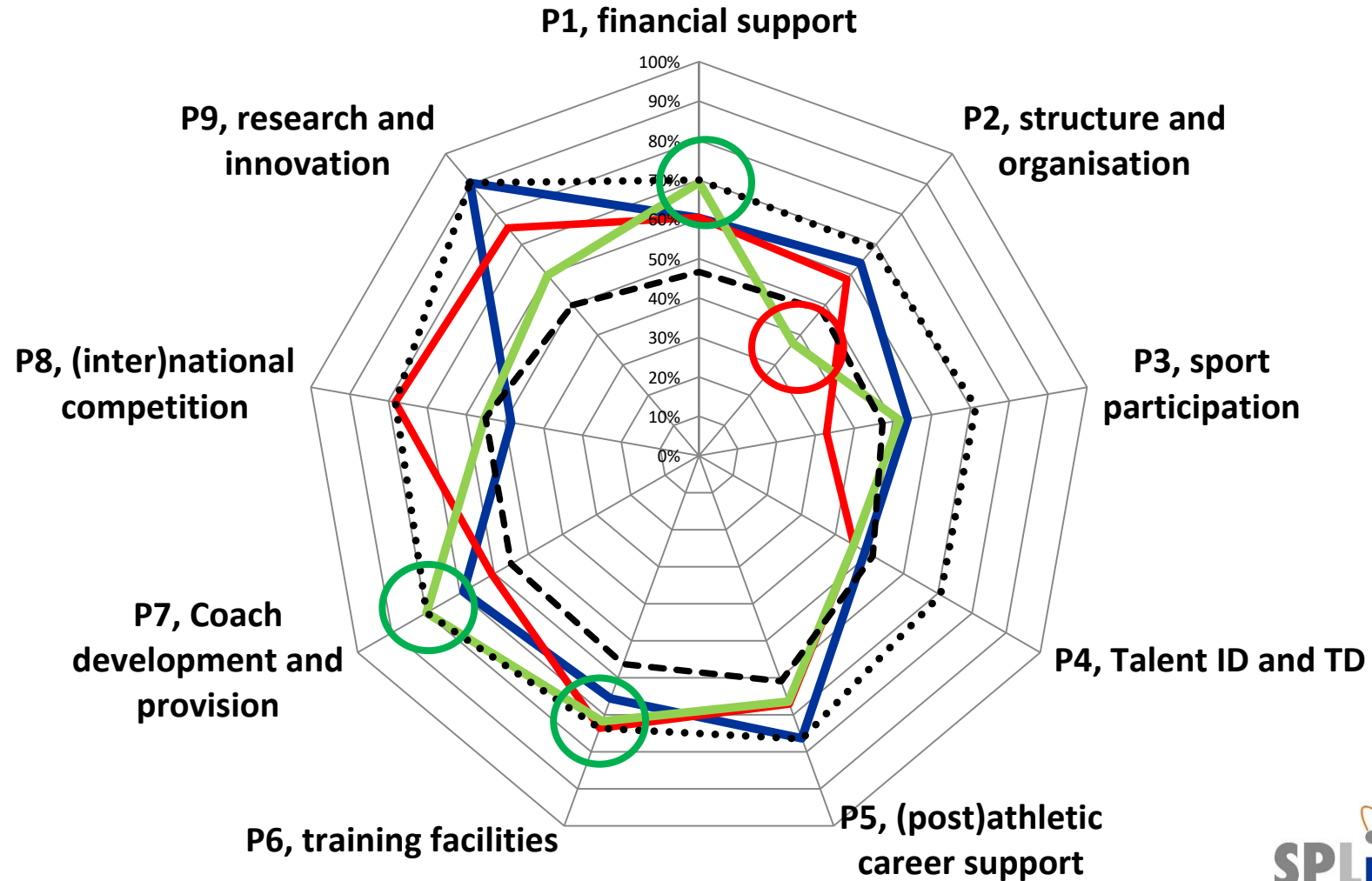
**JAPAN**



**FRANCE**



# Successful summer sport nations



AVERAGE



MAX



CANADA



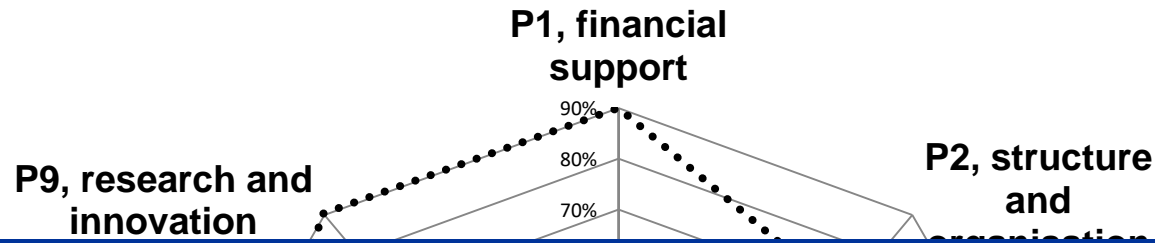
NETHERLANDS



SWITZERLAND

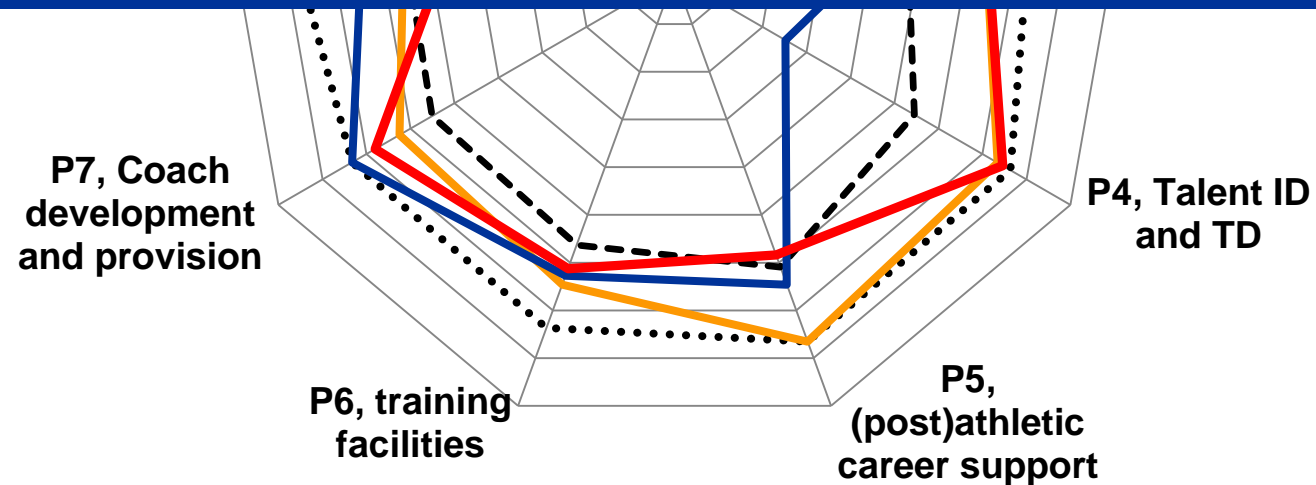


# Successful winter sport nations



no generic blueprint

*no sets of Pillars, Critical Success Factors or recognised best practices that can be transferred into any national context with the guarantee of delivering success (De Bosscher et al., 2015)*

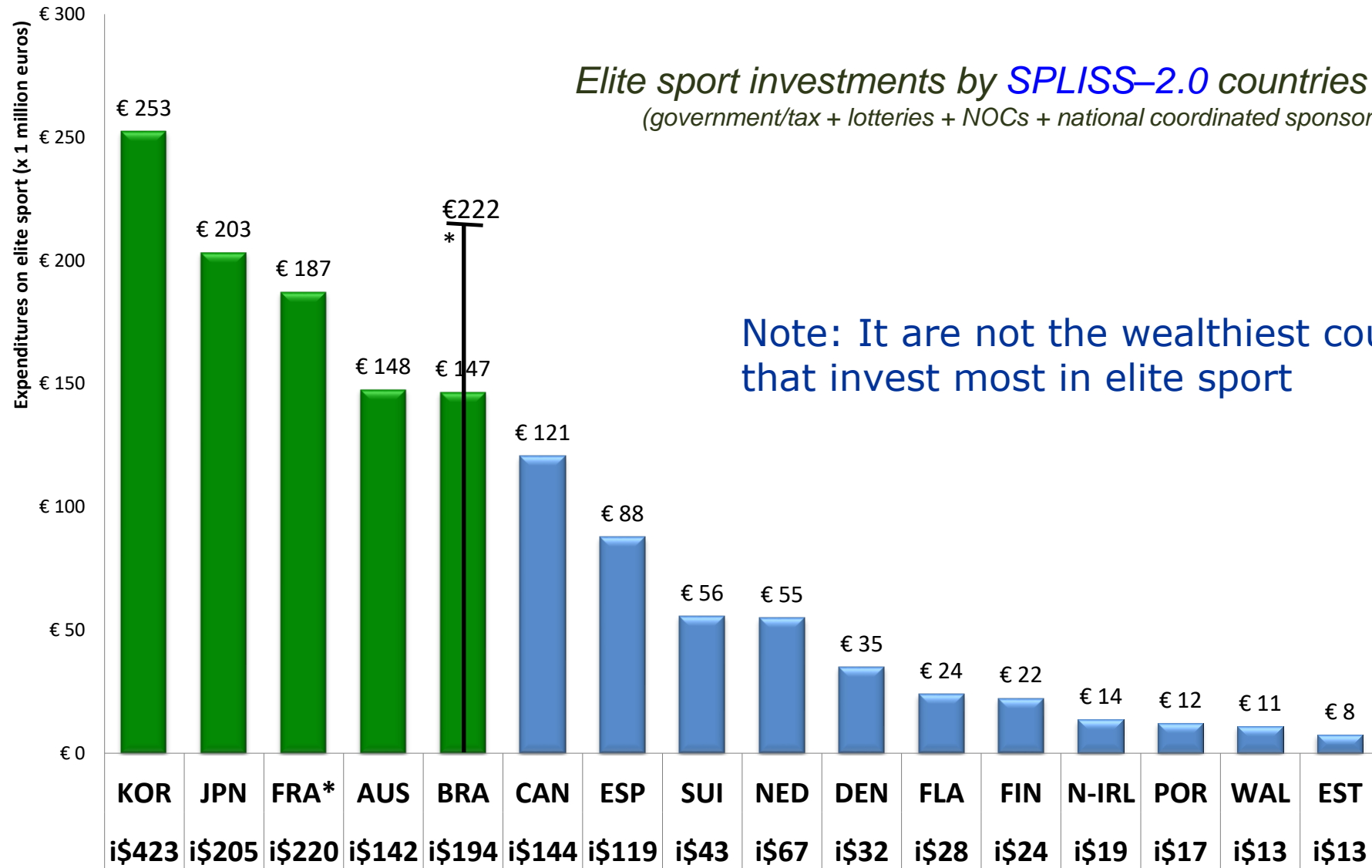






# PRIORITISATION OF FUNDING STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP ELITE SPORT

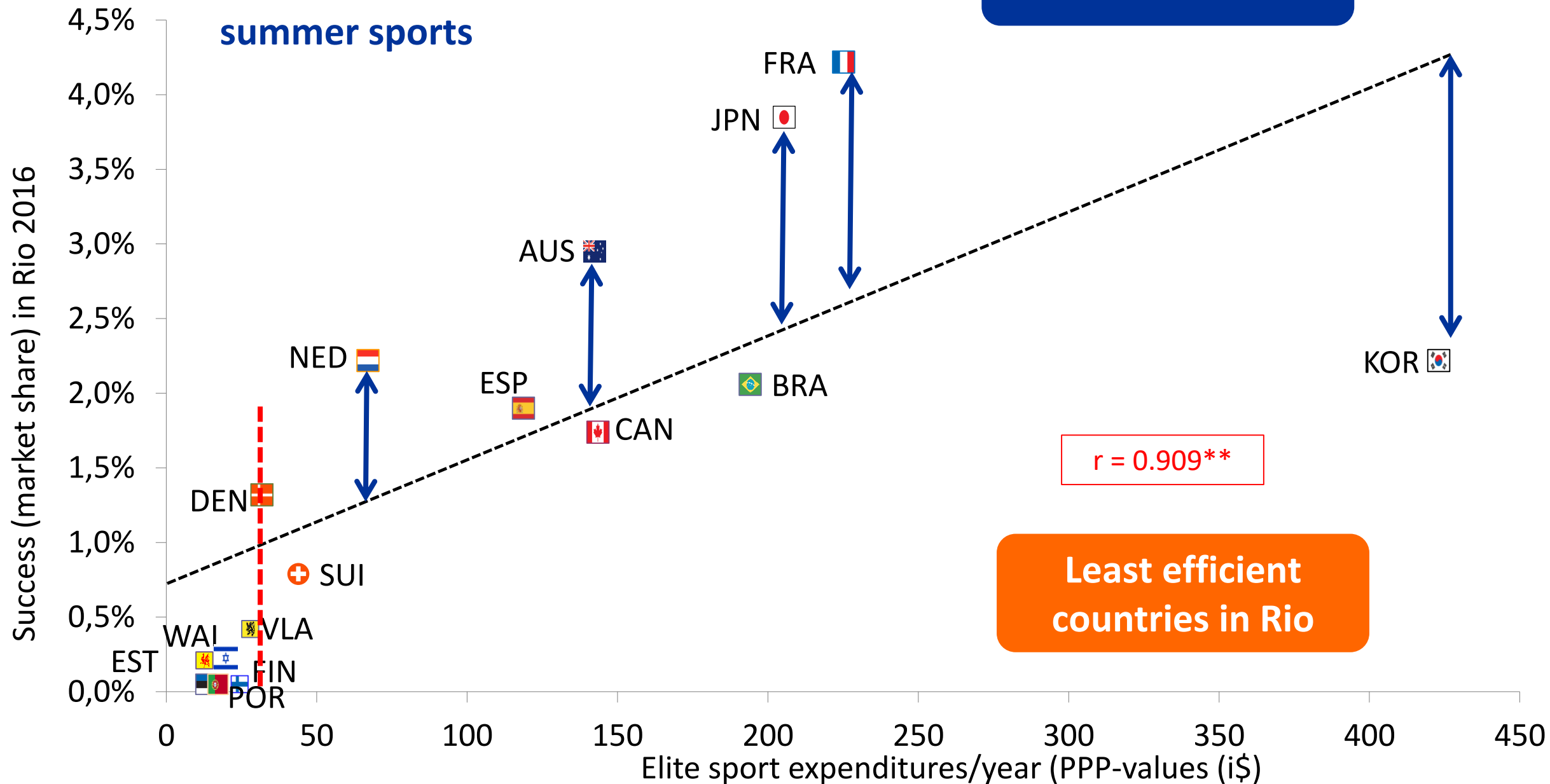
# Funding elite sport (only)



Note: It are not the wealthiest countries that invest most in elite sport

# Efficient nations: money in ... medals out?

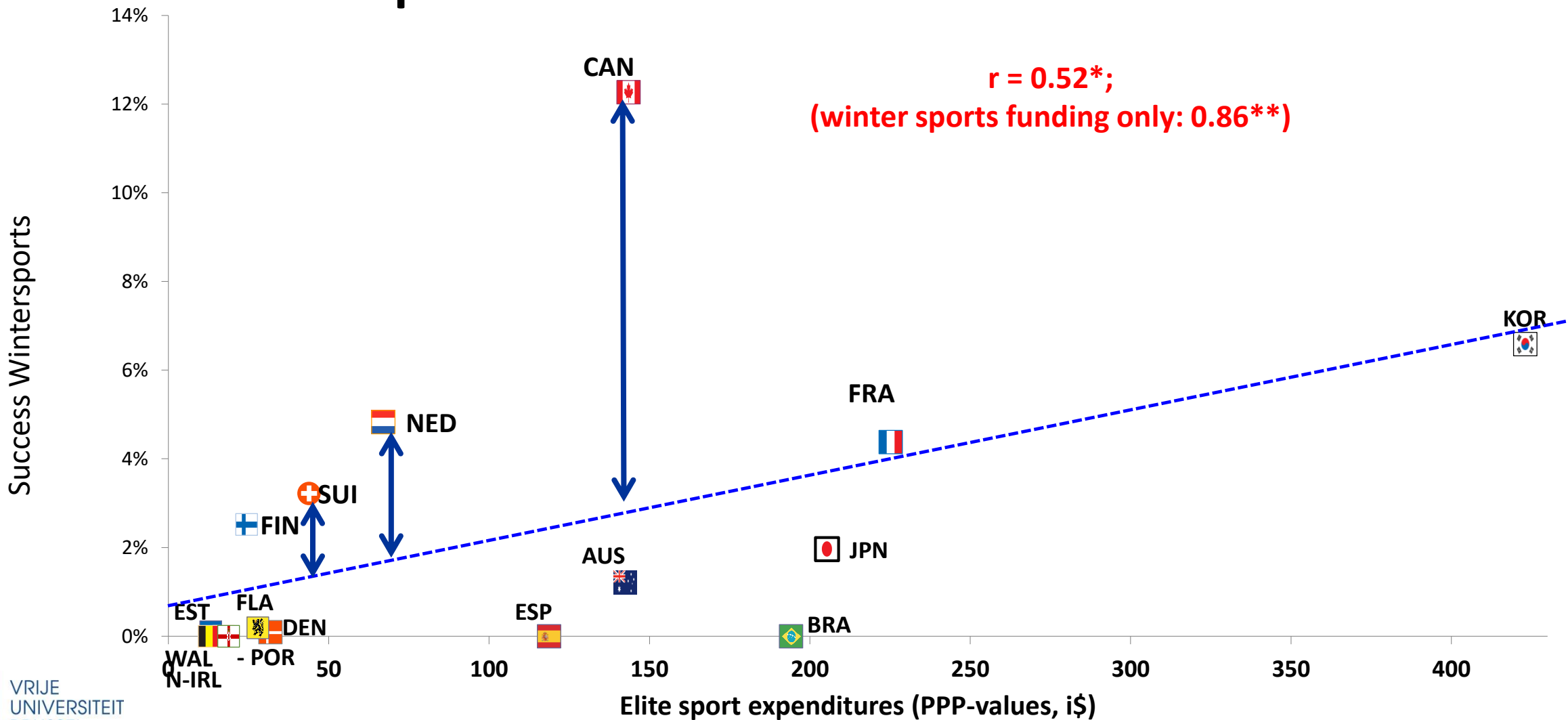
Most efficient countries in Rio



# Efficient nations: money in ... medals out?

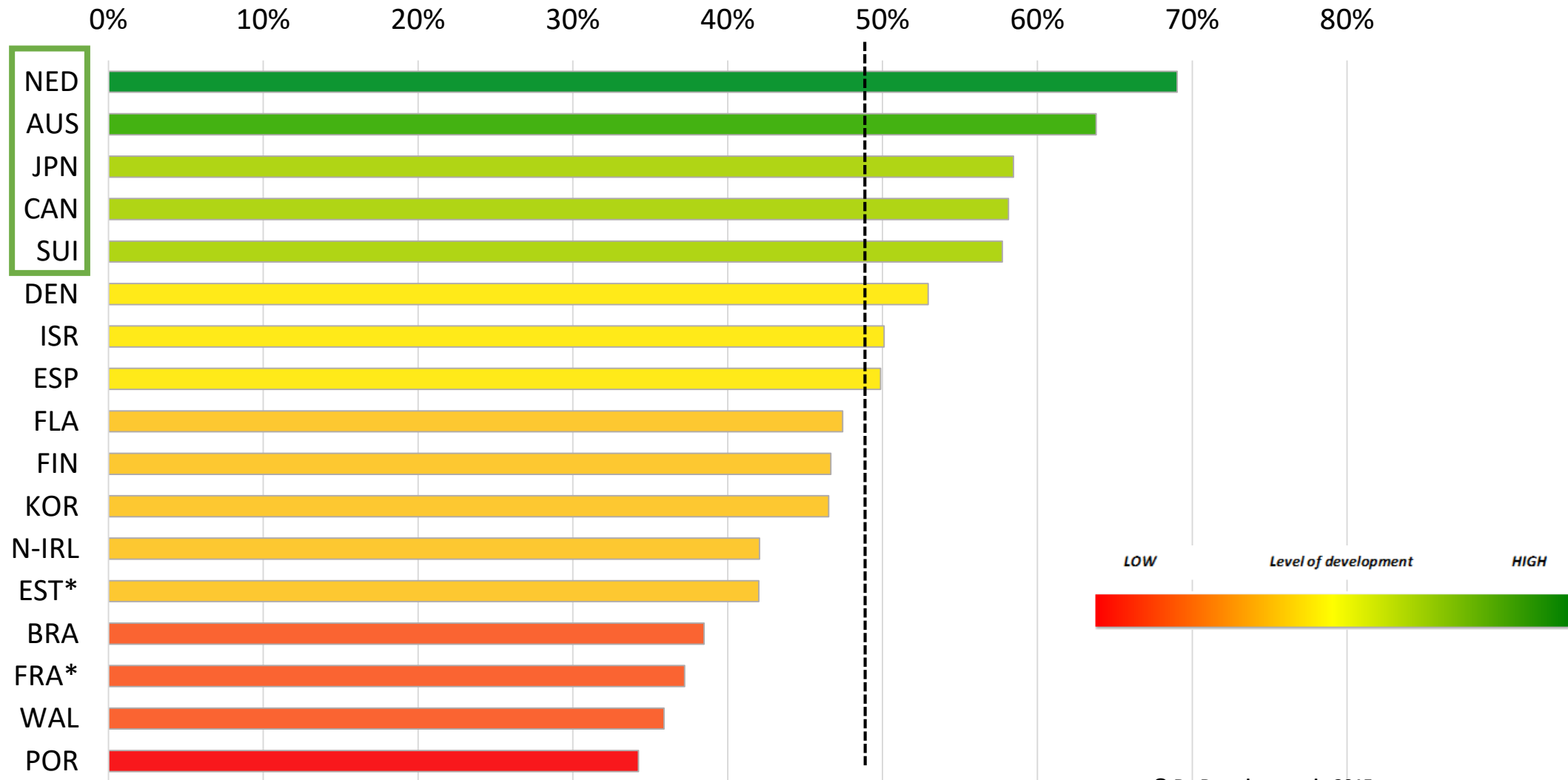
Relation between elite sport expenditures (2010/11) and medals 2009-2012 (OG/WC) (De Bosscher et al., 2015)

## winter sports



# Efficient nations are better structured and organised

## Pillar 2: governance, organisation and structure of elite sport policies

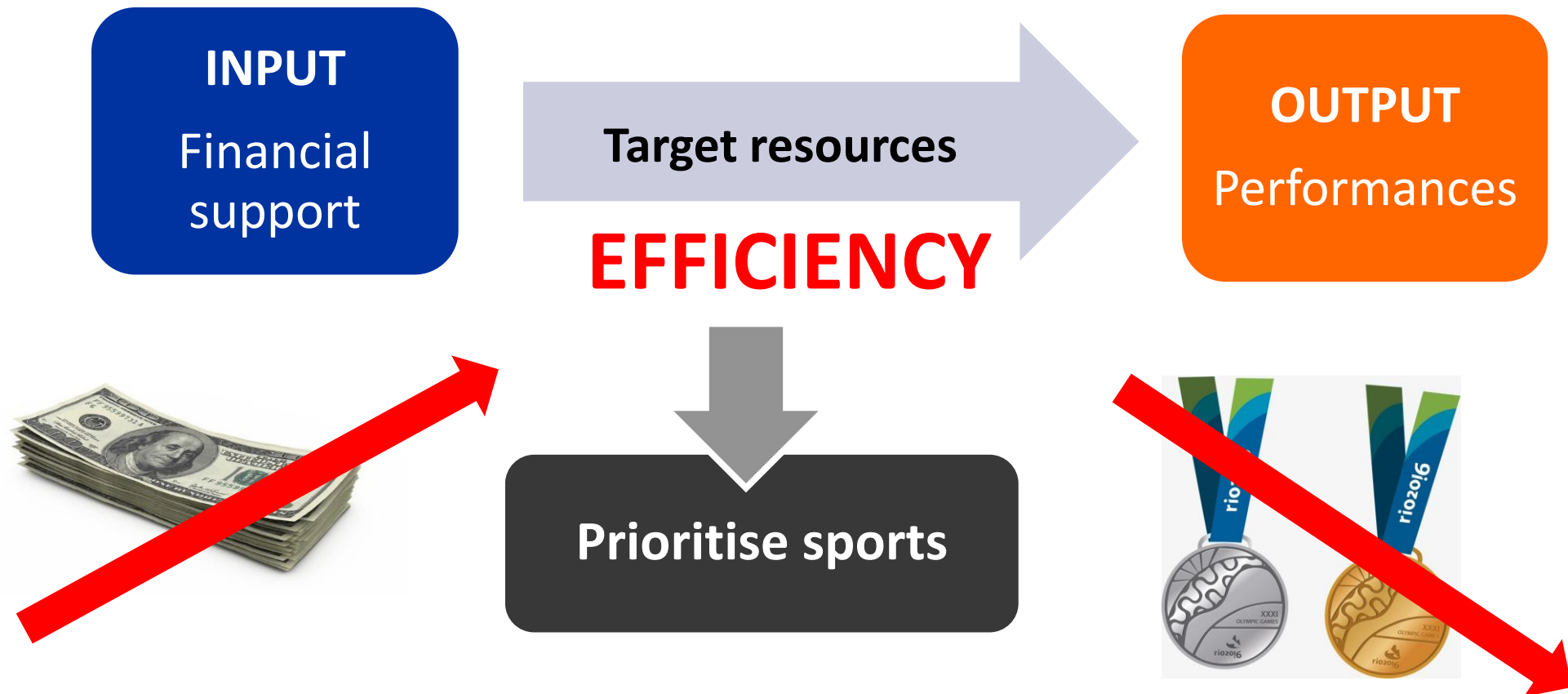


## What is concerned with the governance, organisation and structure of elite sport policies? (= Pillar 2)

- ✓ Strong national **coordination** (mainly by 1 organization)
- ✓ High performance **managers** that guide federations/sports;
- ✓ Fulltime **staff** at the NSA responsible for elite sport development\* (services, communication, coordination)
- ✓ **Accountability** of federations/NSO's – good relationship management and clear **criteria** for the evaluation of federations
- ✓ **Long-term** planning and strategy
- ✓ Good governance - **Networks**: with municipalities & industry
- ✓ Involvement of **stakeholders** in elite sport policies
- ✓ ***Target the resources on only a relatively small number of sports through identifying those that have a real chance of success at world level*** (Green & Oakley, 2001)

# THE PROBLEM: HOW SHOULD NATIONS INVEST IN ELITE SPORT?

- reduced returns on investment



# PRIORITISATION



**Aim**      **TOP 3**

**Strategy**      **NO COMPROMISE**

*“Britain's boxers are among the biggest winners in UK Sport's Olympic 2016 funding programme, but swimming has had a £4m cut to its budget”.*



## Australia's 2012-2022 performance targets

**Top 5**  
Olympics and  
Paralympics

**Top 15**  
**Winter**  
Olympics and Paralympics

**#1**  
Commonwealth  
Games

**20+** World champions annually

## The game plan

*“INVESTING FOR SUCCESS: investment is targeted to achieve the greatest chance of international success”*



# Strategic policy questions

## Funding strategy – priority?

- Sports with **past** performances?
- Athletes with the strongest **medal potential**?
- **Paralympic** as well as **Olympic** sport?
- **Non Olympic** sports?
- **Summer** and **winter** sports?
- **Smaller/ developing** sports?
- **Medal rich** sports? (e.g. athletics/swimming <> team sports)
- Sports with larger **commercial** potential?
- Sports with the **greatest public access to participation**?
- Sports with the **widest social reach and impact**?

# PRIORITISATION = targeted funding to fewer sports



## Research question

- Have nations adopted a prioritization policy of elite sports funding?
- How do they prioritize?

## Hypothesis 1

- Nations with a priority approach are more successful than nations with a diversity approach.

## Hypothesis 2

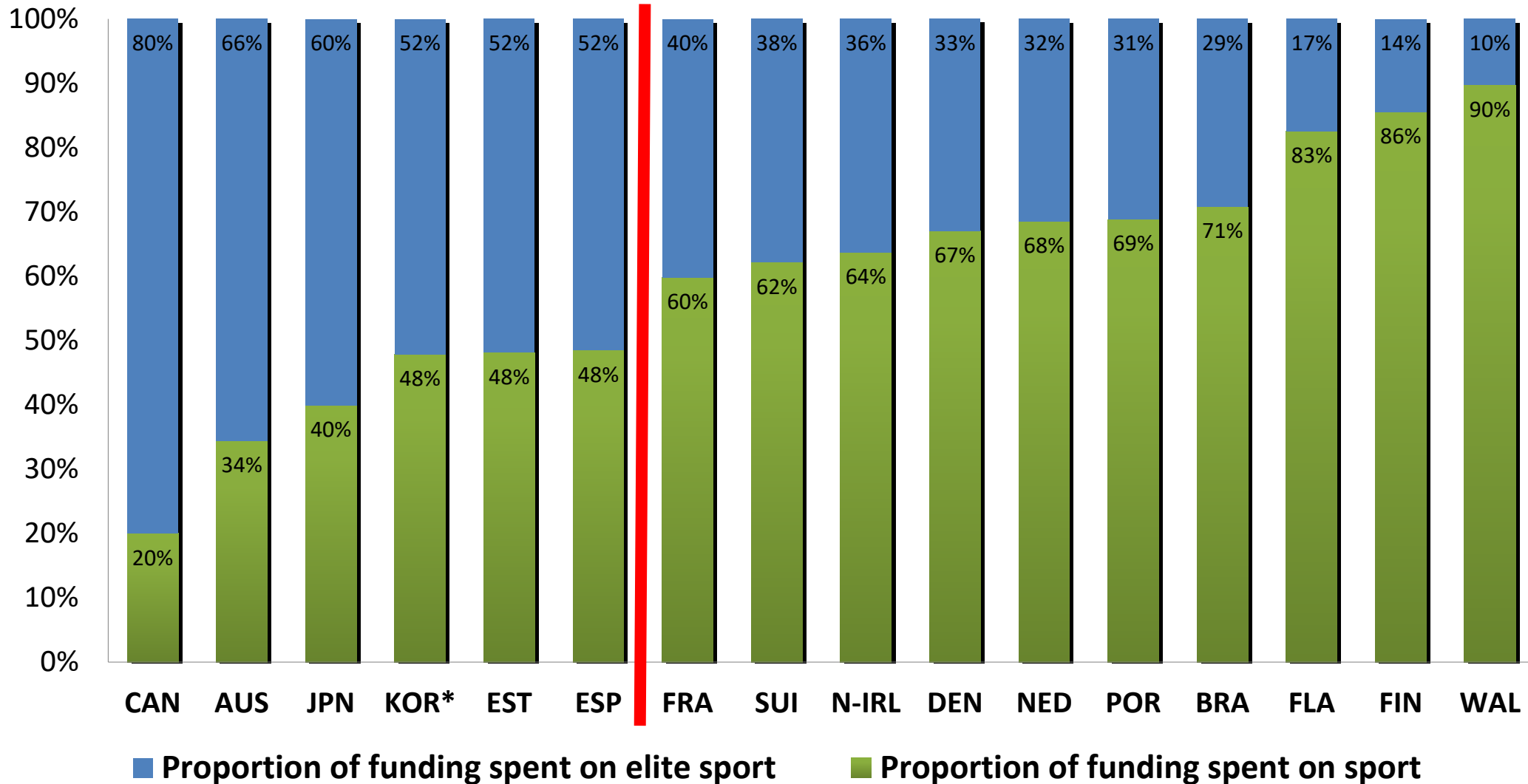
- Nations with a diversity approach win medals in more sports than countries with a priority approach.

## Hypothesis 3

- Nations with a priority approach, are more successful in those sports that they prioritise.

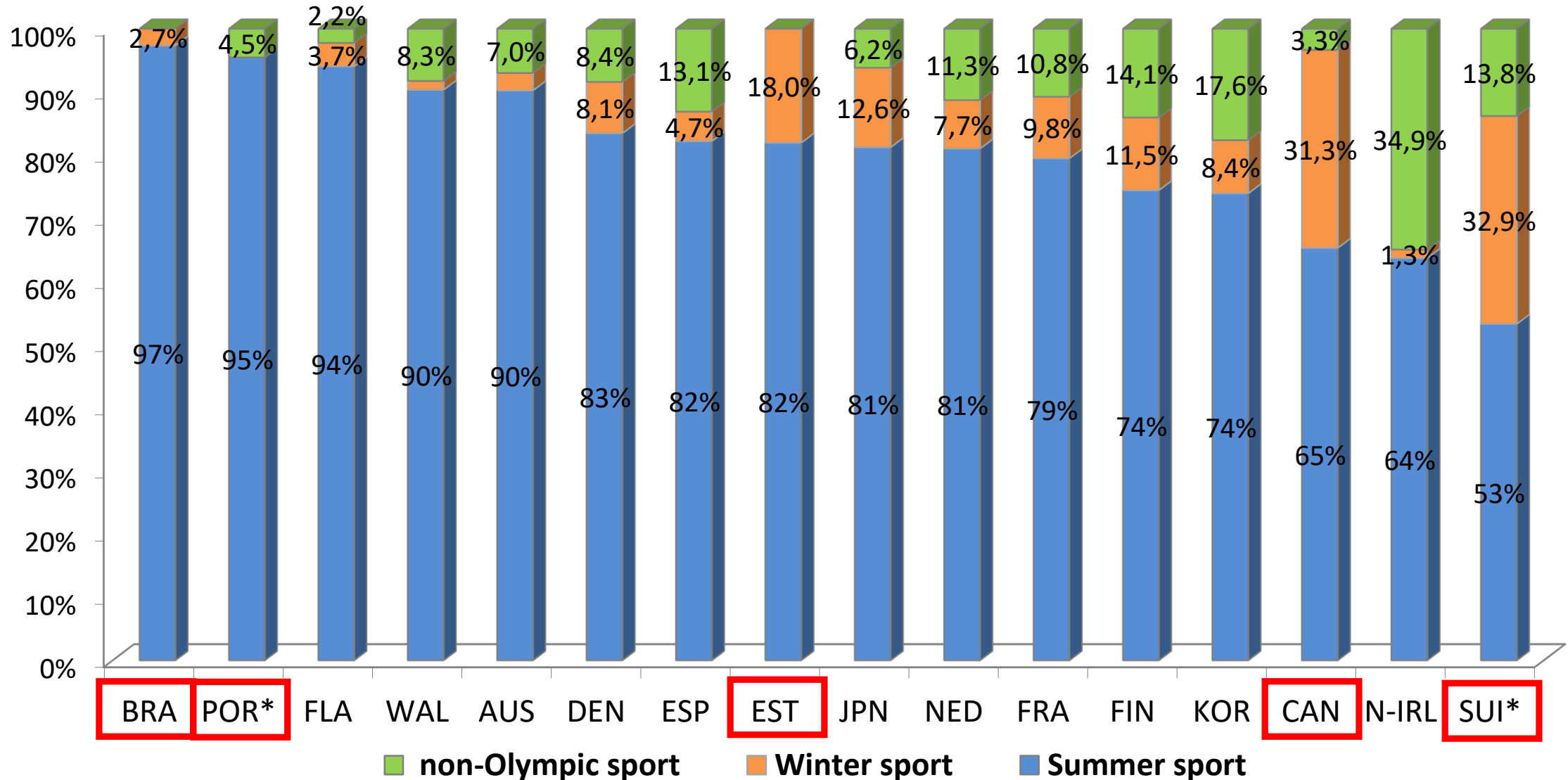
# 1) Do nations prioritise funding?

(a) Grassroots sport versus elite sport (government & lottery funding)

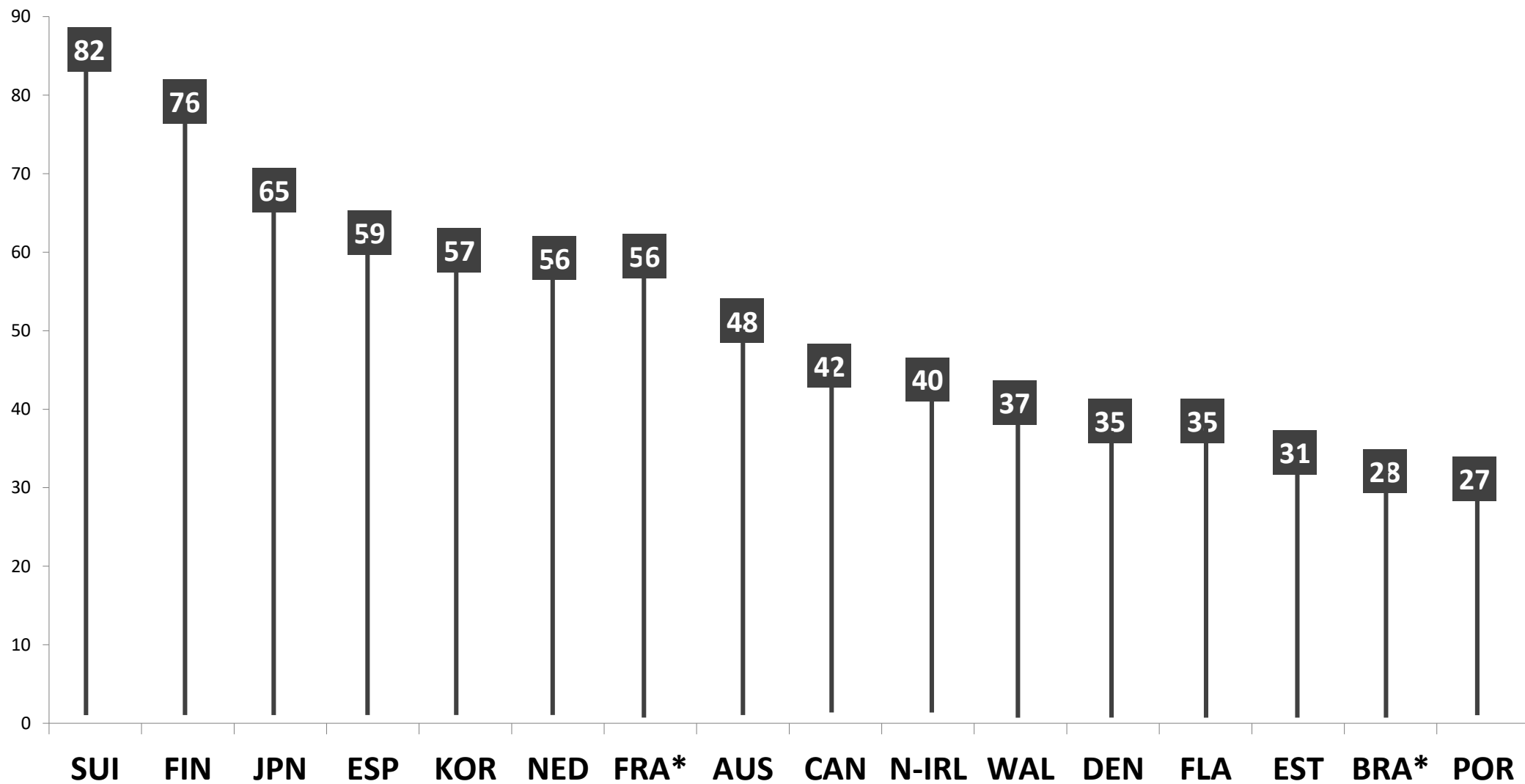


# 1) Do nations prioritise funding?

## (b) Olympic sport vs non Olympic sport; summer vs winter sports



# Total number of sports funded



## 2) How much do nations prioritise?

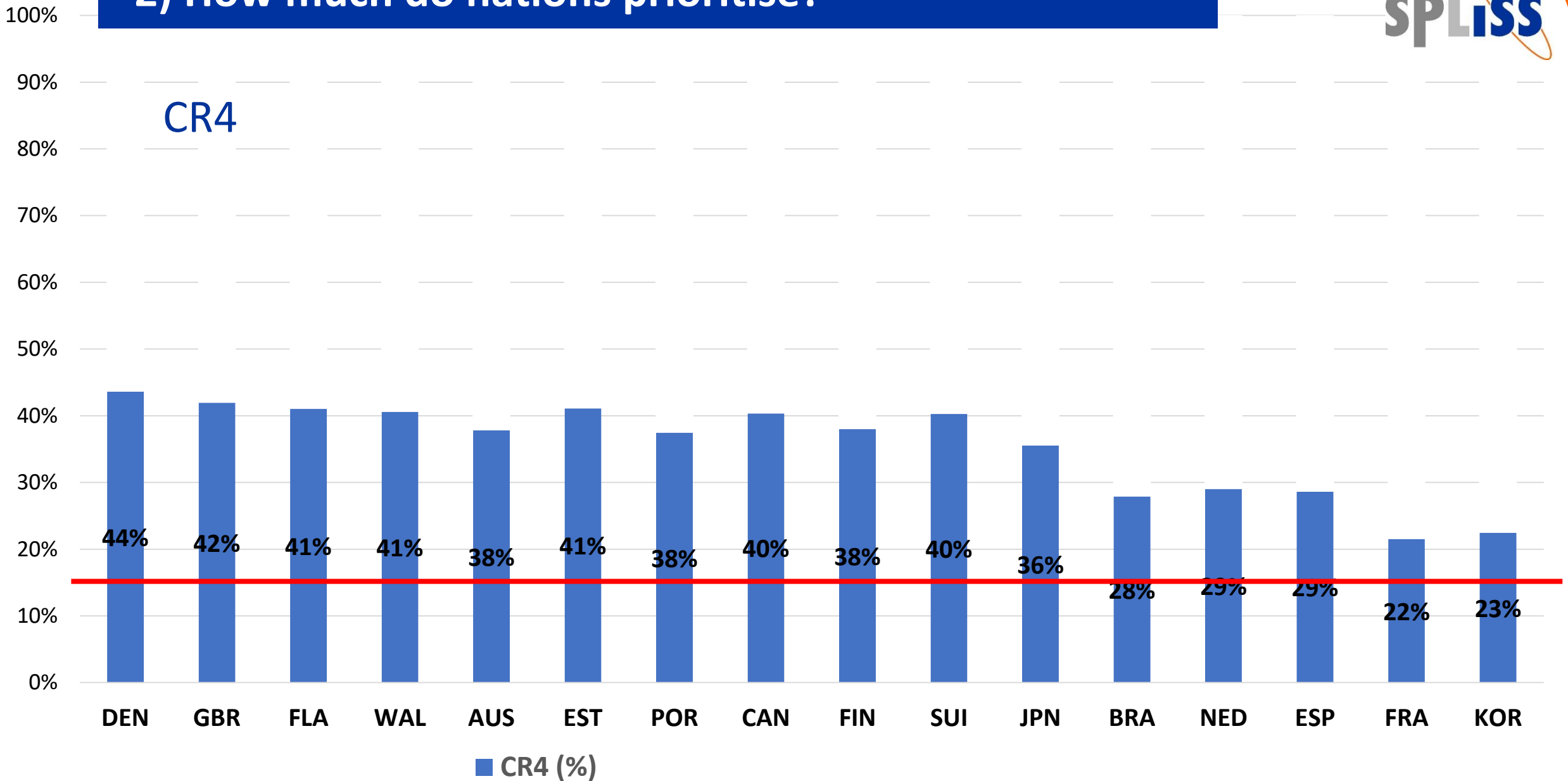
### Concentration ratio CR4 and CR8

- **CR4** = the total share (%) in funding of the **four** sports with the highest funding;
- **CR8** = the total share (%) in funding of the **eight** sports with the highest funding;



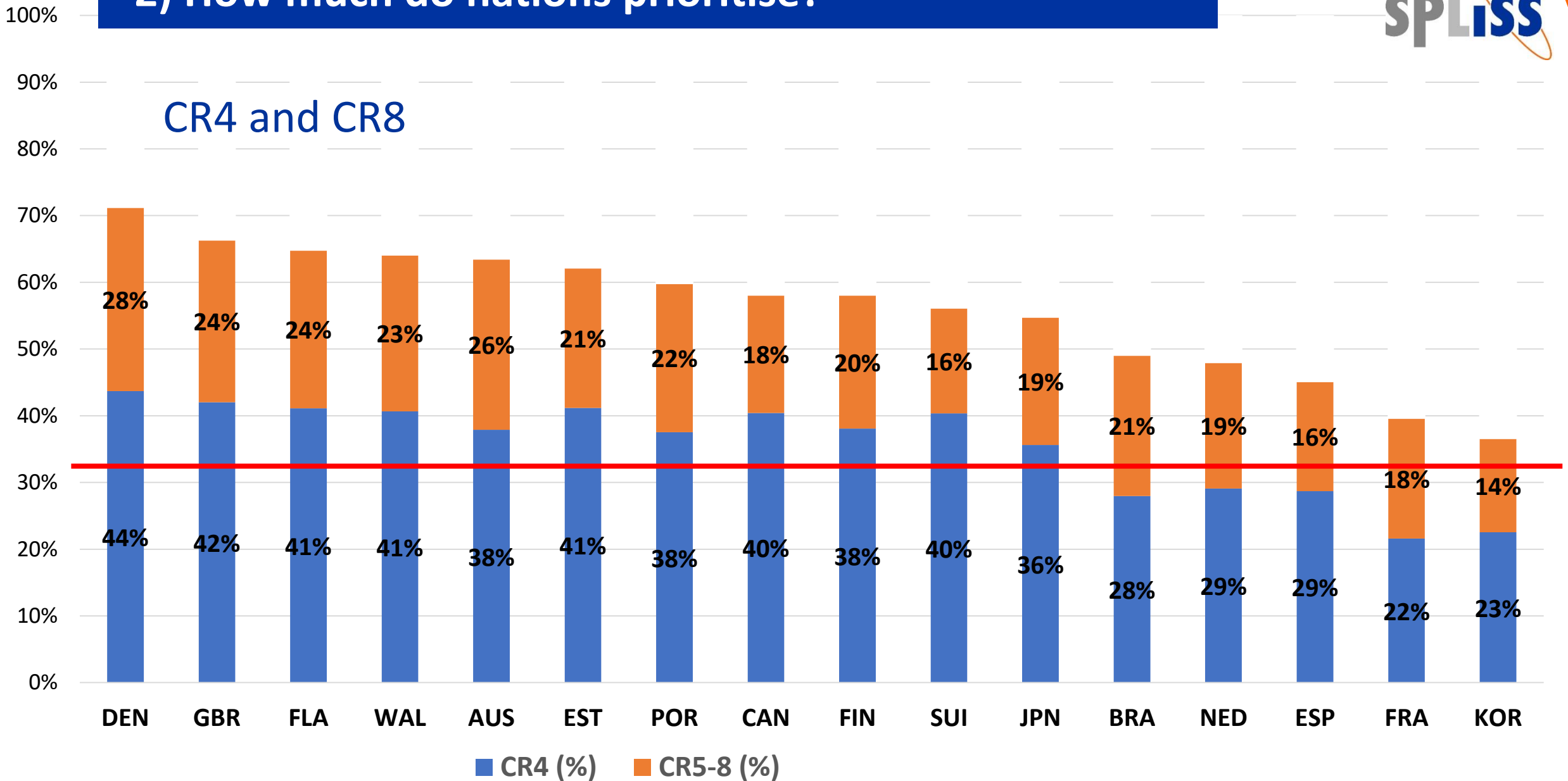
## 2) How much do nations prioritise?

CR4

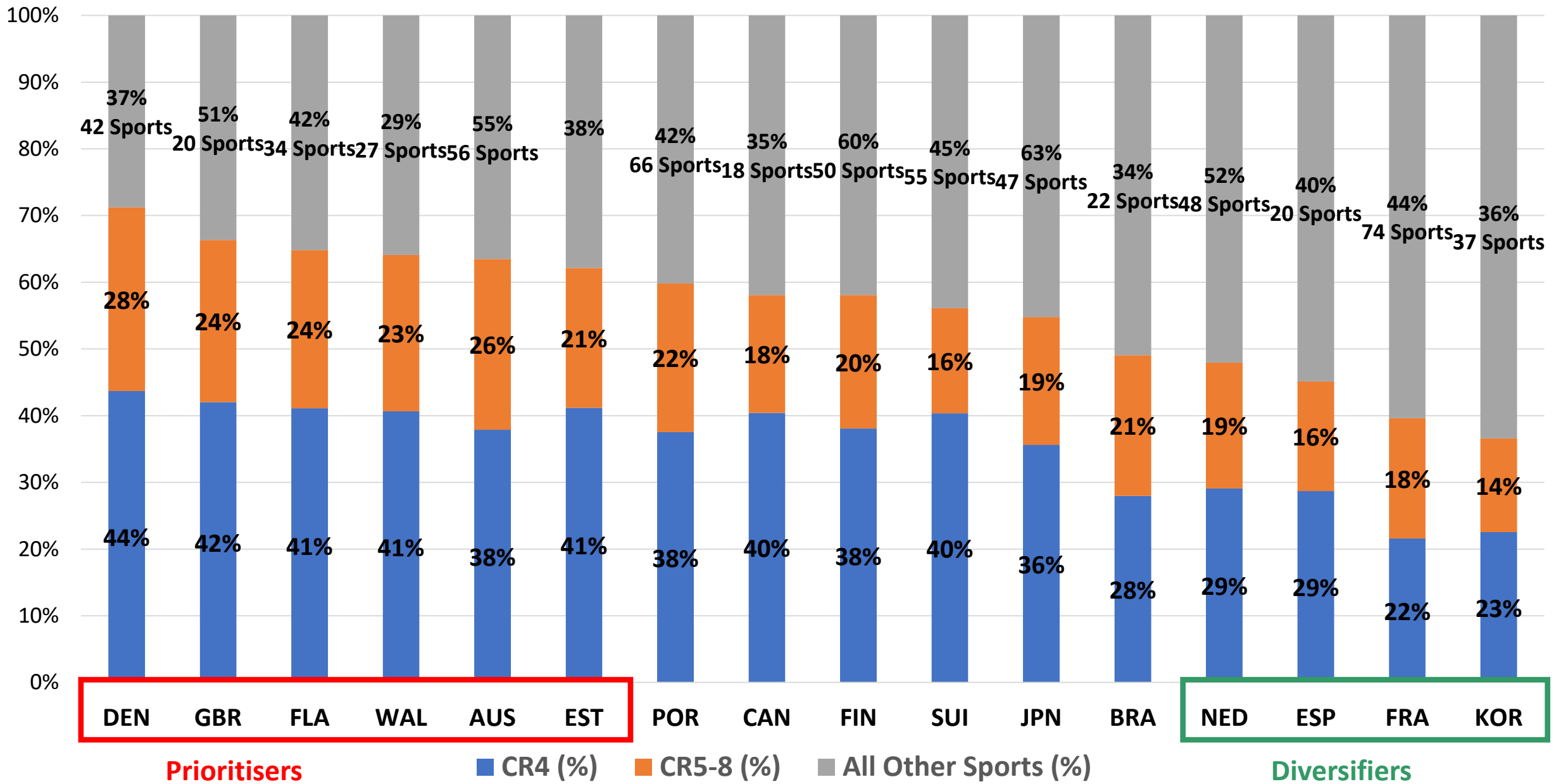


## 2) How much do nations prioritise?

### CR4 and CR8







# Note: a need to prioritise?

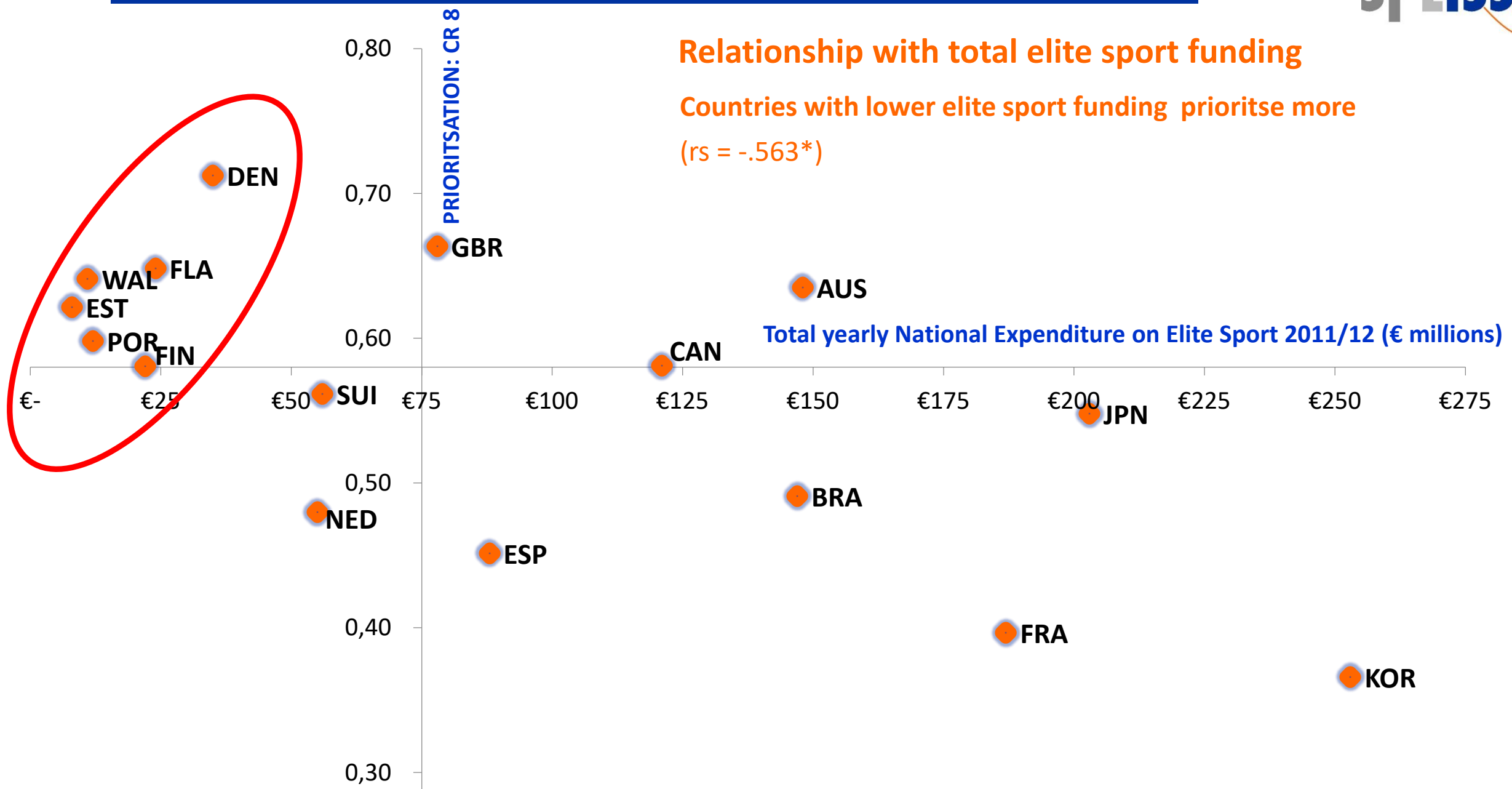
## Relationship with total elite sport funding



# Note: a need to prioritise?

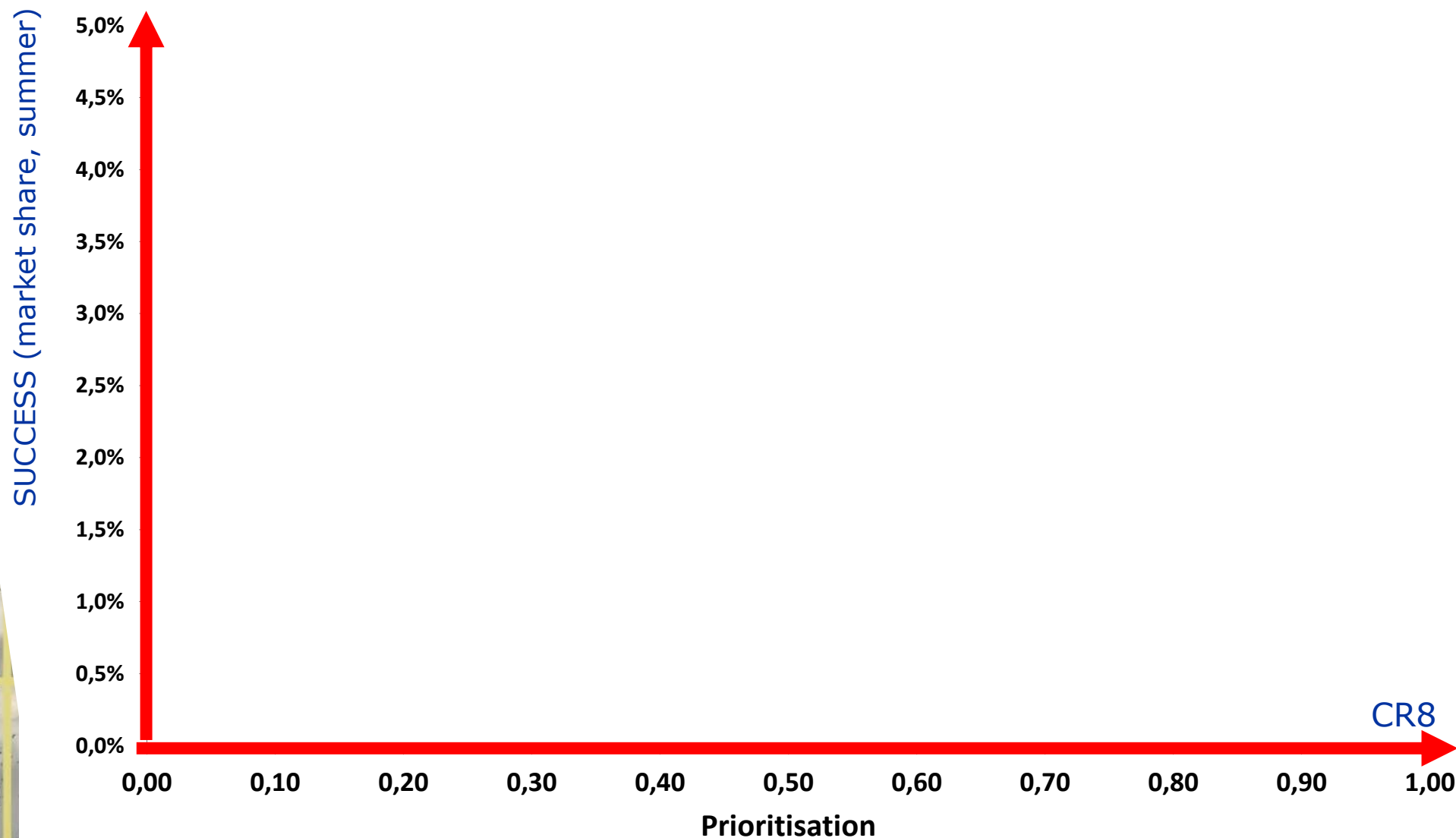
## Relationship with total elite sport funding

Countries with lower elite sport funding prioritise more  
( $r_s = -.563^*$ )



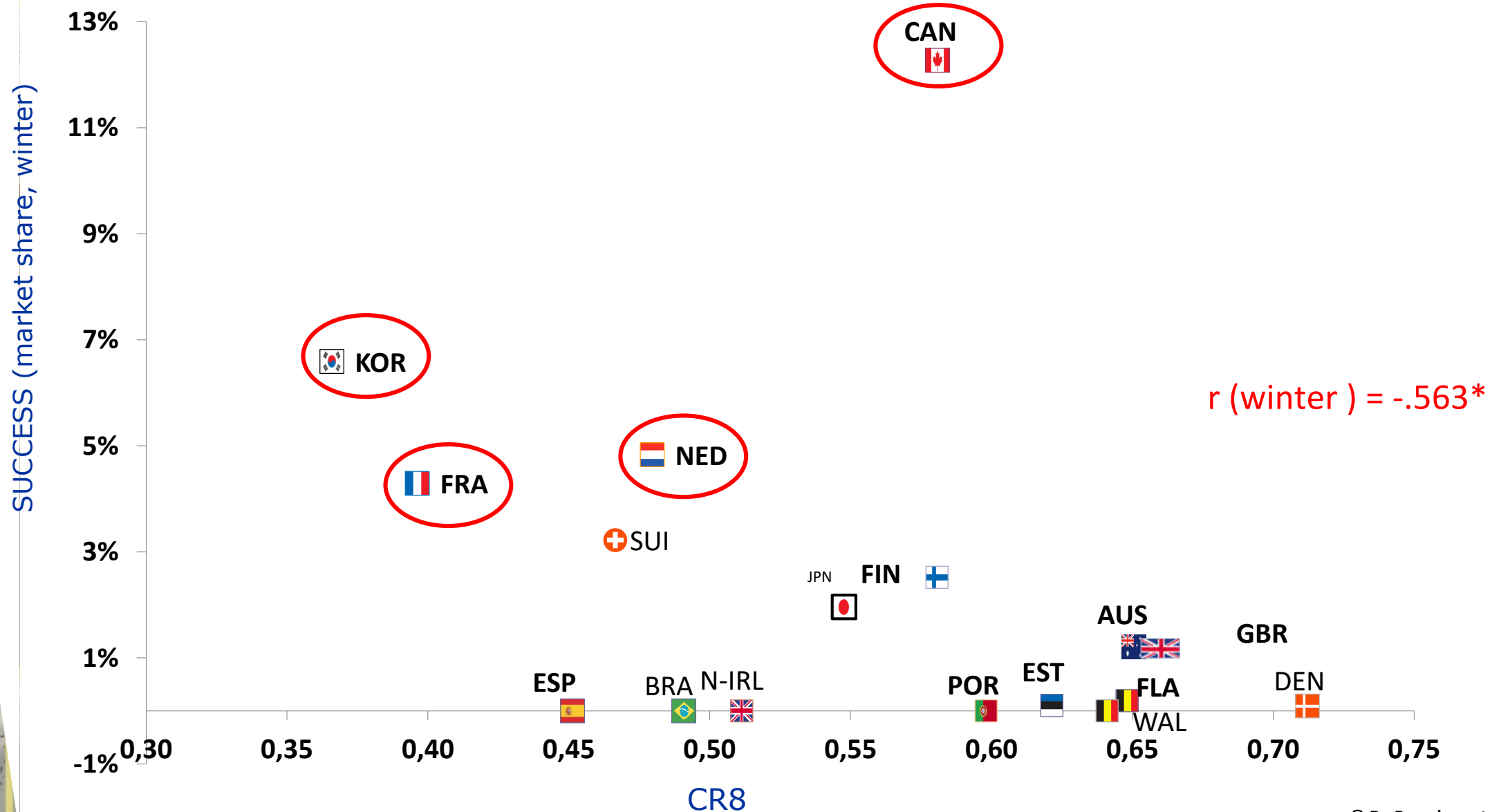
# HYPOTHESIS 1

Are nations with a priority approach more successful than nations with a diversity approach? (summer sports)



# HYPOTHESIS 1

Are nations with a priority approach more successful than nations with a diversity approach? (WINTER sports)



# HYPOTHESIS 1

**NATIONS WITH A PRIORITY APPROACH ARE MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN NATIONS WITH A DIVERSITY APPROACH**

**NOT CONFIRMED**



# HYPOTHESIS 2

$r_s = .557^*$

4 years cycle

Nations with a diversity approach win medals in more sports than countries with a priority approach

	# SUMMER sports medalled	# WINTER sports medalled	TOTAL # sports medalled	PRIORITISATION # sports with 75% of the funding
FRA	25	7	32	20
CAN	17	12	29	14
JPN	18	7	25	16
GBR	16	4	20	12
ESP	19	0	19	20
AUS	16	2	18	11
KOR	14	3	17	27
SUI	9	8	17	24
NED	13	3	16	18
FIN	5	8	13	14
BRA	10	0	10	16
DEN	9	1	10	10
FLA	5	1	6	11
EST	4	1	5	12



## HYPOTHESIS 2

**NATIONS WITH A DIVERSITY APPROACH WIN MEDALS IN MORE SPORTS THAN COUNTRIES WITH A PRIORITY APPROACH**

**CONFIRMED**





## HYPOTHESIS 3

**NATIONS WITH A PRIORITY APPROACH, ARE MORE SUCCESSFUL IN THOSE SPORTS THAT THEY PRIORITISE**

**= efficiency**



# Efficiency: are nations more successful in the prioritised sports? (summer)

<b>GREAT BRITAIN</b>				<b>AUSTRALIA</b>			
	Funding	Top 3	Top 8		Funding	Top 3	Top 8
1. Aquatics				1. Aquatics			
2. Rowing				2. Cycling			
3. Cycling	44,2%	59,3%	59,5%	3. Rowing	44.6%	65.9%	66.8%
4. Athletics				4. Football			
5. Sailing				5. Athletics			
6. Canoe	69,7%	80,5%		6. Hockey	74.6%	89.6%	84.4%
7. Hockey				7. Sailing			
8. Equestrian				8. Basketball			

Highly **PRIORITISING** countries

# Efficiency: are nations more successful in the prioritised sports? (summer)

<b>FRANCE</b>	Funding	Top 3	Top 8			
1. Athletics	25.5%	45.4%	42.0%	<b>Highly <u>DIVERSIFIED</u></b>		
2. Handball						
3. Aquatics						
4. Cycling	<b>S-KOREA</b>	Funding	Top 3		Top 8	
5. Sailing	47.8%	82.4%	1. Shooting	31.3%	21.5%	19.8%
6. Judo			2. Athletics			
7. Canoe			3. Badminton			
8. Rowing			4. Aquatics			
			5. Hockey			
			6. Judo	50.8%	41.1%	40.3%
			7. Cycling			
			9. Gymnastics			

# Efficiency: are nations more successful in the prioritised sports?

(spearman's rho)

	Correlation top 3	Correlation top 8
<b>Great Britain (n=26)</b>	.802**	.815**
<b>Australia (n=28)</b>	.760**	.711**
<b>France (n=28)</b>	.723**	.760**
<b>Denmark (n=28)</b>	.662**	.714**
<b>Netherlands (n=28)</b>	.658**	.734**
<b>Japan (n=28)</b>	.614**	.593**
<b>Canada (n=28)</b>	.584**	.531**
<b>Spain (n=28)</b>	.578**	.635**
<b>Switzerland (n=28)</b>	.547**	.541**
<b>Brazil (n=28)</b>	.505**	.620**
<b>Portugal (n=28)</b>	.459*	.394*
<b>Finland (n=28)</b>	.425*	.377*
<b>Flanders (n=25)</b>	.416*	.674**
<b>Estonia (n=28)</b>	.376*	.475*
<b>S-Korea (n=28)</b>	.320	.421
<b>Wallonia (n=30)</b>	.296	.247

r-top3 = .530\*\*  
 r-top8 = .529\*\*  
 n=445



## HYPOTHESIS 3

~~NATIONS WITH A PRIORITY APPROACH,~~ ARE MORE  
SUCCESSFUL IN THOSE SPORTS THAT THEY FUND

**CONFIRMED**



# CONCLUSIONS



# 1) INPUT – OUTPUT

## More money in ... more medals out?

- The absolute amount of money is the most crucial success driver .... BUT

*“the rules of the game are dictated by what rival nations are doing, not solely on what an individual nation is doing now compared to what it did in the past” (De Bosscher et al., 2008)*

## 2) PRIORITISATION



- 1) highly funded sports generally deliver the most success;
- 2) prioritisation per se is not necessarily a driver of absolute success.
- 3) diversification enables medals to be won across a greater number of sports
- 4) nations with lower elite sport expenditures tend to prioritise more, but those with higher expenditures do not necessarily prioritise less

### In conclusion:

- Different approaches along the prioritisation/diversification continuum can be efficient
- nations **balance** investments between
  - number of **medal** winning **opportunities** <> **culturally significant** sports

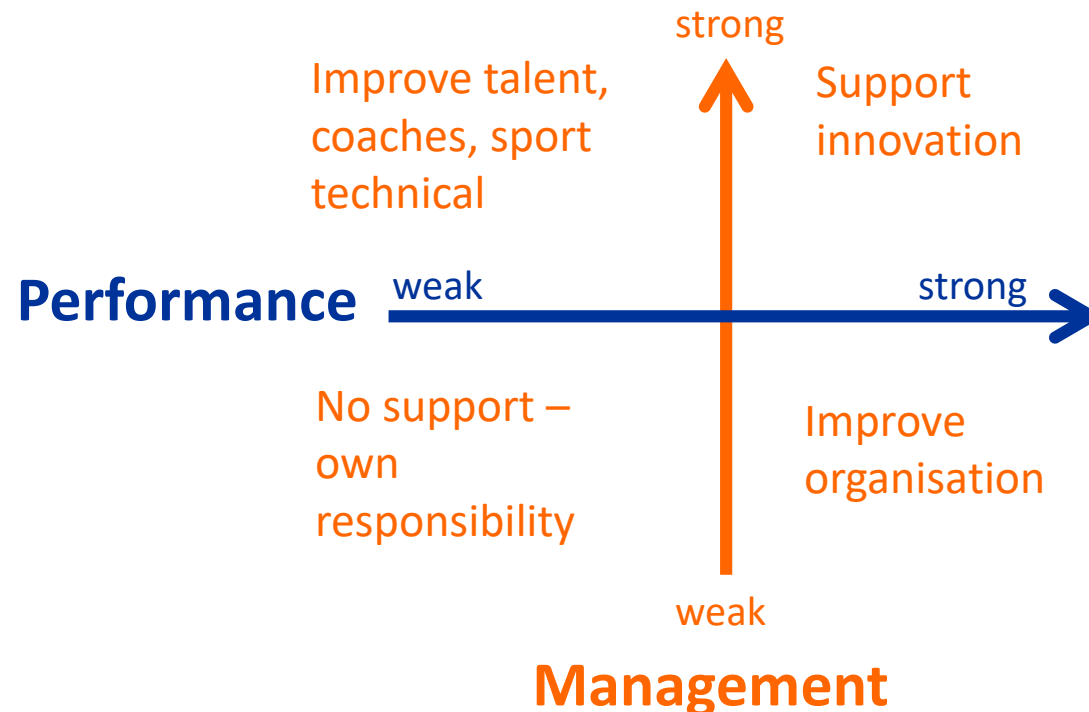


# STRATEGY?

## *Areas that need to be explored (examples)*

### **Pillar 1 (finance) and 2 (organization):**

- Prioritization: how do nations decide on funding sports?
  - Performance based <> management based <> cultural value/tradition of sports





# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

# THE VALUE OF SUCCESS

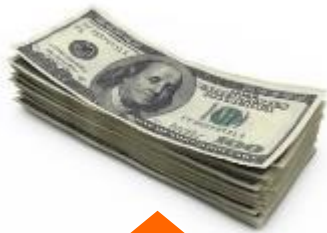
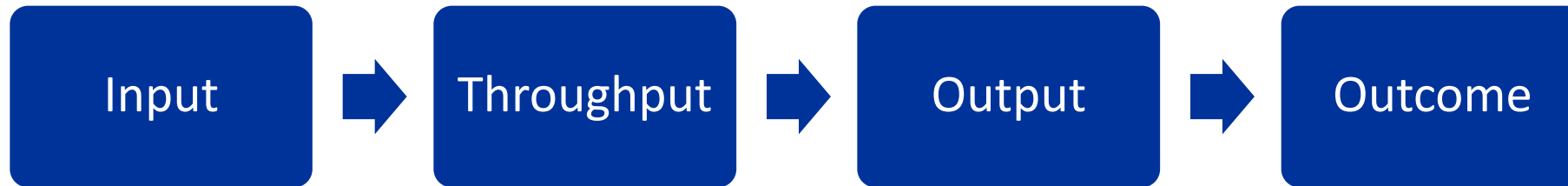


## **RISK OF PRIORITISATION** - Unintended consequences

- no alternative plan if the targeted sport fails in the future
- An athletic career takes 15 years ... need for long-term elite sport policy
- An impediment to innovation of sport organisations

## **WHY DO NATIONS INVEST IN ELITE SPORT?**

So what??



Legitimization of using public money  
for elite sport

# Mapping Elite Sport's potential Societal Impact (MESSI) model



athletes & teams

success

events

stakeholders

dimension

## Unity

Collective equity, identities & norms

## Uniqueness

Granting experiences, attractiveness & prestige

## Upgrade

Leveraging skills, (sport) participation, corporations & communities

themes

1. Social equality & inclusion

2. Collective identity & pride

3. Ethics & fair play

4. Feel good & passion

5. Fans & (media) attraction

6. International prestige & power

7. Athletes ability & quality of life

8. Sport participation & life skills

9. Sponsors & commercial activity

10. Local consumption & living conditions

pro's

integration  
social equality: racial & ethnic  
Inclusion

community identity  
community pride  
socializing opportunities

ethics  
fair play  
social debate

pleasure  
experience  
passion

fandom  
mass media  
sport knowledge

globalization  
international prestige  
country/city marketing

fame  
role model function  
quality of life

sport participation  
volunteering  
health awareness

economic boost  
Sponsorships  
sport industry assets

consumption  
employment  
tourism

con's

sexism  
exclusion  
racism

rivalry  
nationalism  
shame

corruption  
Hooliganism  
doping

disappointment  
failure  
losing

gambling  
repulsion  
drop sport's image

power abuse  
bad international image  
war propaganda

pressure  
injuries  
safeguarding issues

discouragement  
unhealthy habits  
unrealistic body image

association with scandals  
financial losses  
window dressing

legacy costs  
environmental impact  
living conditions



*De Bosscher, V.\*, Shibli, S., Weber, A.C (2019). Is prioritisation of funding in elite sport effective? An analysis of the investment strategies in 16 countries. European Sport Management Quarterly, 221-243, DOI: 10.1080/16184742.2018.1505926.*

**THANK YOU - DZIĘKUJĘ BARDZO**



***INTERESTED IN SPLISS?***

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***More information: [www.SPLISS.net](http://www.SPLISS.net)***

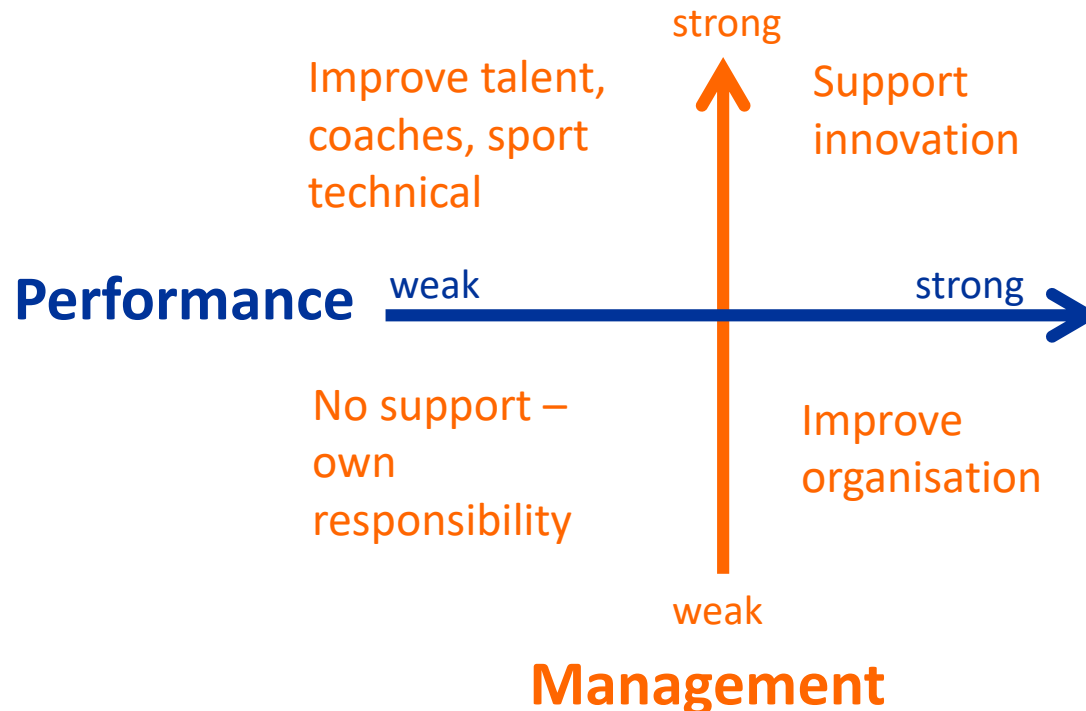


# UP TO SPLISS 3.0???

## *Areas that need to be explored (examples)*

### **Pillar 1 (finance) and 2 (organization):**

- Prioritization: how do nations decide on funding sports?
  - Performance based <> management based <> cultural value/tradition of sports



# UP TO SPLISS 3.0???

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